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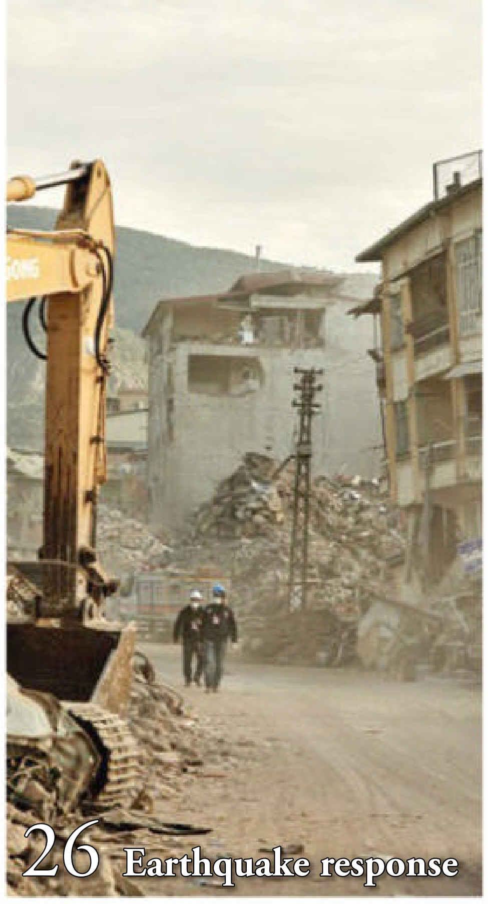
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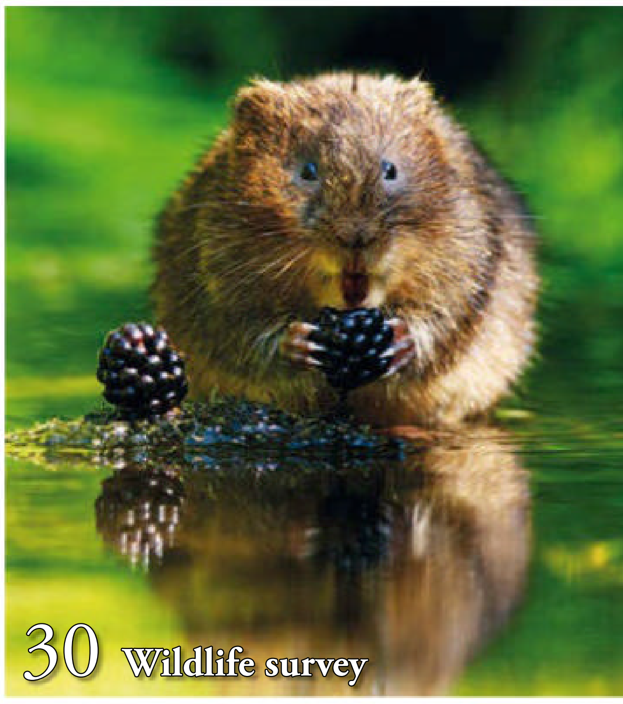
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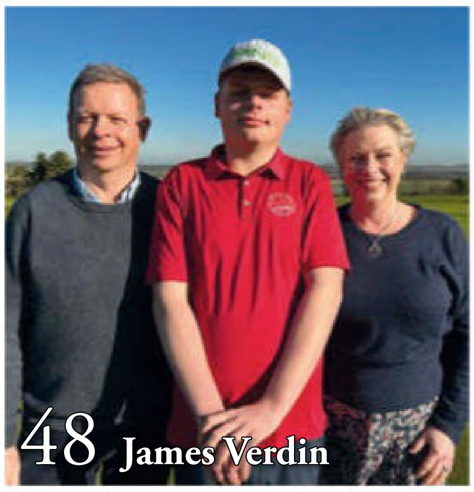
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Staff
Editor-in-Chief/Publisher: Mark Allen
Editor: Georgie Green
01722 717025
editor-wl@markallengroup.com
Publishing Director: Jane Kennedy
01722 717018
jane.kennedy@markallengroup.com
Circulation Director: Sally Boettcher
sally.boettcher@markallengroup.com
Subscription Manager: Bethany Foy
Page Design: Mary Holmes
Advert Design: Dan Bevan
Production Manager: Carolyn Allen
Production Director: Richard Hamshere
Managing Director: Paul Geoghegan
Chief Executive Officer: Ben Allen

Contributors
Grant Berry, Sophie Butcher,
Kitty Cole, Rose Eva, Simon Heptinstall,
Gary Lawrence, Mary-Vere Parr,
Stephen Roberts

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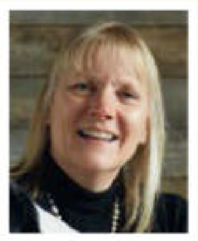

From town and village halls to historic buildings, Georgie Green enjoys the diversity of art and crafts on our doorstep.

OVER THE past few weeks, I have found myself visiting a few favourite places that I haven't been to for a while, and at the same time discovering more about the creative talent that we have right here in all corners of the county.

It all started with a trip to Salisbury Playhouse to see a production of Alan Ayckbourn's *How The Other Half Loves*, which I first saw there in 1986.

I must admit I'm not really a big Ayckbourn fan. The play, billed as a classic comedy takes us into a chaotic world of dysfunctional marriages, domestic drama, and infidelity as the lives of three couples frantically intertwine in this play of confusion and chaos.

It was written at the end of the 1960s. The set and performances captured this era so perfectly. The audience at times roared with laughter – sometimes rather uncomfortably. My goodness, we have come a long way since its first performance and it is hard to accept, that this play is now considered a period piece.

With funding cuts in the arts, theatres and other venues across the country are facing tough times. It was therefore good to see a packed Playhouse on a Tuesday evening. It is worth remembering that for every actor we see on the stage, there is someone behind scenes playing their part in researching and then creating the set, right down to sourcing avocado dishes, making sure a production is authentic and that it runs smoothly for each performance - therefore putting on a show does not come cheaply.

On page 38 we reveal more about the many theatres across the county both professional and amateur, often run or supported by volunteers.

These small theatres are where amateur actors trip the boards and put on entertaining shows – they are also places where professional actors start their careers.

At Salisbury Playhouse, the youth theatre Stage 65 has played its part in launching many a professional actor's career – from Christopher Biggins and the wonderful late Hattie Ladbury to countless people who work behind the scenes. There are Hollywood movies with the names of Stage 65 members listed in the credits. Big or small these theatres need our support.

Continuing on my arts trail, I also visited the rather splendid Crudwell Village Hall to listen to an entertaining lecture by Marc Allum, *Antiques Roadshow* expert.

It was organised by the Malmesbury Arts Society. On their website they describe themselves as 'a vibrant and friendly society that brings people together to share and widen their enjoyment and appreciation of all forms of art.' That is exactly what I discovered – a warm and welcoming group of people, with a shared love of the arts. I can thoroughly recommend seeking out a group near you, there are several across the county and this charity believes that the arts can enrich and nourish people's lives. I for one really believe it does – the Malmesbury group are testament to this, and the food was delicious – all home-made, including the biscuits. Here is the website to find a group near you: https://theartssociety.org/

The next venue on my tour was Kin House at Kington Langley, formally known as the Greathouse. In recent years things were not so great for this Georgian Grade II listed building, it was rather down on its luck and in need of complete restoration. In step people with creative vision and artistic skills, craftsmen and women with the vision to bring life and vitality back into this remarkable building. It has now been returned to its former glory. Just passing by, from the roadside it is quite incredible to see the freshness of its centuries old architectural detail.

My final visit was to Malmesbury town hall, on the last Saturday of every month they have a craft fair – it was wonderful, filled with creative local people selling everything from hand knitted items and bunches of British grown flowers to paintings and wrought iron work. I bought a pair of fingerless gloves – I haven't taken them off…

Across this county there are so many talented people, let's support them as they make our lives much richer through their creative endeavours. I can say with all honesty having spent a few days soaking up the artistic success in the county it has put me in good stead for my next trip. I'm making a plan to follow the wonderful Wylye Valley Art Trail – see page 20 – there really is something for everyone.

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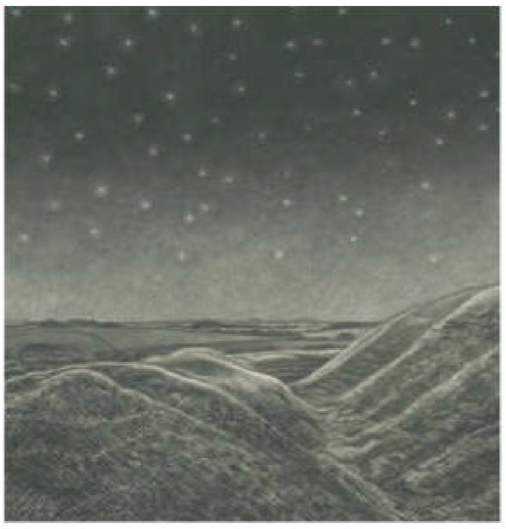
Easter activities and fun for all the family

Trails to follow, eggs to find, live music, an eco-fair and an all star pantomime

This Month

WESSEX LANDSCAPES OF ASSOCIATION BY ROB POUNTNEY
WILTSHIRE MUSEUM, DEVIZES
The exhibition features works inspired by the Wessex landscape and writings of Thomas Hardy *wiltshiremuseum.org.uk*



1st

THE BRIDGE QUARTET WITH CHRISTOPHER KENT
ST MARY'S CHURCH, BOYTON, BA12 0SS
Beethoven's Holy Song of Thanks (String quartet op 132 in A minor). Tickets via William Mitchell: boyton7lw@gmail.com

1st-16th

EASTER ADVENTURES
LACOCK ABBEY
Easter adventure in the gardens amidst the spring blooms and blossoms. Follow the activity trail and collect a chocolate egg at the end. *www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wiltshire/lacock*

1st-16th

EASTER ADVENTURE TRAIL
STOURHEAD
Follow the trail – activities include pin the tail on the bunny, help buzzy bee find their way back to the hive and swoop like a swallow. *nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wiltshire/stourhead*

©NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES TREVOR RAY HART

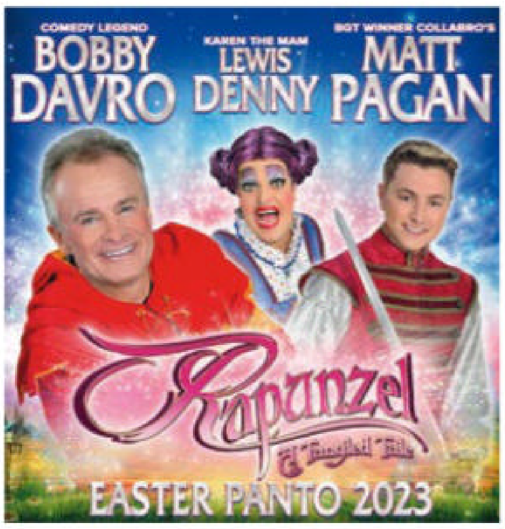
1st-16th

EASTER TRAIL
AVEBURY MANOR GARDEN
Fun and creative activities for children. Compete at an apple toss, follow wildlife clues and find out what's growing in the garden. Collect an Easter egg at the end. *www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury*

©NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES JAMES DOBSON

3rd

RAPUNZEL
WYVERN THEATRE, SWINDON
Fun-filled Easter pantomime with music, energetic dance routines as well as plenty of jokes, slapstick, and heaps of audience participation. *swindontheatres.co.uk*



ASH MILLS

5th

HOLY WEEK CONCERT: STAINER'S CRUCIFIXION
SALISBURY CATHEDRAL
The full Cathedral Choir will perform The Crucifixion: A Meditation on the Sacred Passion of the Holy Redeemer. *salisburycathedral.org.uk*

3rd-7th

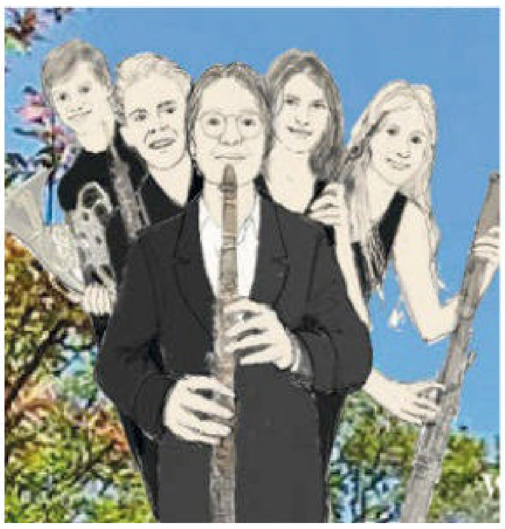
EASTER BUNNY & THE LOST EGGS TRAIL
WILTON HOUSE
Join the hunt to help Easter Bunny and his toy friends find all of the lost eggs. Supporting Julia's House children's hospice. *juliashouse.org/Eggs*

5th

LITTLE WOMEN
SWINDON ARTS CENTRE
This classic retains all the charm of the original novel, with a twist; the four sisters, their family and friends are all played by just one woman.
swindontheatres.co.uk

20th

OUT OF THE BLUE – NEW INVESTIGATIONS OF BOLES BARROW. ONLINE TALK BY RICHARD OSGOOD MBE
It has been shelled, driven over and excavated three times, but still retains mystery.
Salisburymuseum.org.uk



23rd

FONTHILL HOUSE OPEN GARDEN
NEAR TISBURY, SP3 5SA
Cherubim Young Musicians will be performing a range of music from jazz violin to flute and harp with outdoor woodwind music.
cherubimtrust.org

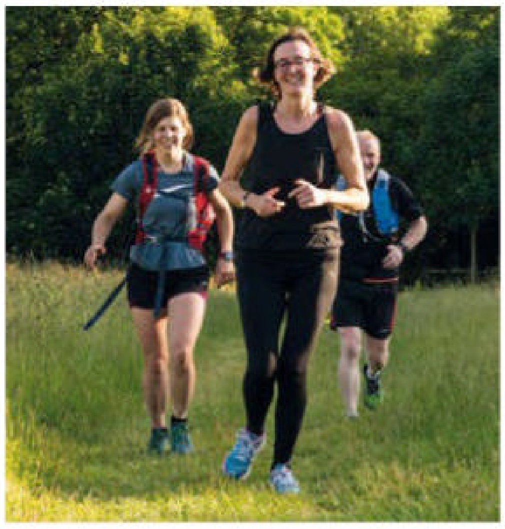
CORSHAM
ECO
FAIR

22nd

CORSHAM ECO FAIR
HIGH STREET & DIGITAL MANSION, CORSHAM
On Earth Day, more than 25 stalls, advice on becoming more sustainable and delicious vegan and vegetarian food.
corsham.gov.uk/eco-fair

23rd

AVEBURY TRUST 10
AVEBURY
Enjoy a challenging 10k trail run with stunning views across the wider Avebury landscape. Registration is from 8.30am.The Trust10 run will begin at 9am.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury



1st-26th

EASTER BUG TRAIL
CORSHAM
Find the bugs, write down the name of the shop or business where you spotted them, and return the form to the Town Hall by May 2 to win a fantastic prize. *corsham.gov.uk*

Music & Food
Function Room
Available

28th

DAOIRÍ FARRELL
POUND ARTS CENTRE, CORSHAM
Award winning singer and bouzouki player Daoirí Farrell who has toured and played festivals across the world.
poundarts.org.uk

27th

THE MAGIC OF THE BEE GEES: YOU WIN AGAIN TOUR
SALISBURY PLAYHOUSE
Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother, it's time to put on your dancing shoes, and celebrate.
wiltshirecreative.co.uk

29th

LANDSCAPE WALK
WADEN HILL, AVEBURY
This guided walk takes in some of the Neolithic monuments which make up this ancient and intriguing landscape.
Price: £8. Booking essential.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury

29th

SING-A-LONG-A ENCANTO
SALISBURY PLAYHOUSE
Join Mirabel as she tries to save the magic surrounding the Encanto. Sing your heart out, full fancy dress is strongly encouraged.
wiltshirecreative.co.uk

The hit musical shown on screen with lyrics so EVERYONE can join in!
Sing-a-Long-a
ENCANTO

AROUND THE COUNTY

Sing for The King

A new choral composition from the Royal School of Church Music will celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.

Salisbury-based Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) *Sing for the King*, is a special choral music commission from acclaimed British singer and composer Joanna Forbes L'Estrange to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III on May 6 and choirs are invited to play their part in this historic event.

The Mountains shall bring peace uses words from the Psalms, including 'Give the King they judge, O God', 'The mountains shall bring peace'; and 'Sing to the Lord a new song', and is suitable for all choirs in a range of settings. It has enough grandeur for large choirs to sing on formal occasions, while its accessible melodic sweep lends an intimacy that will be enjoyed by smaller groups and gatherings.

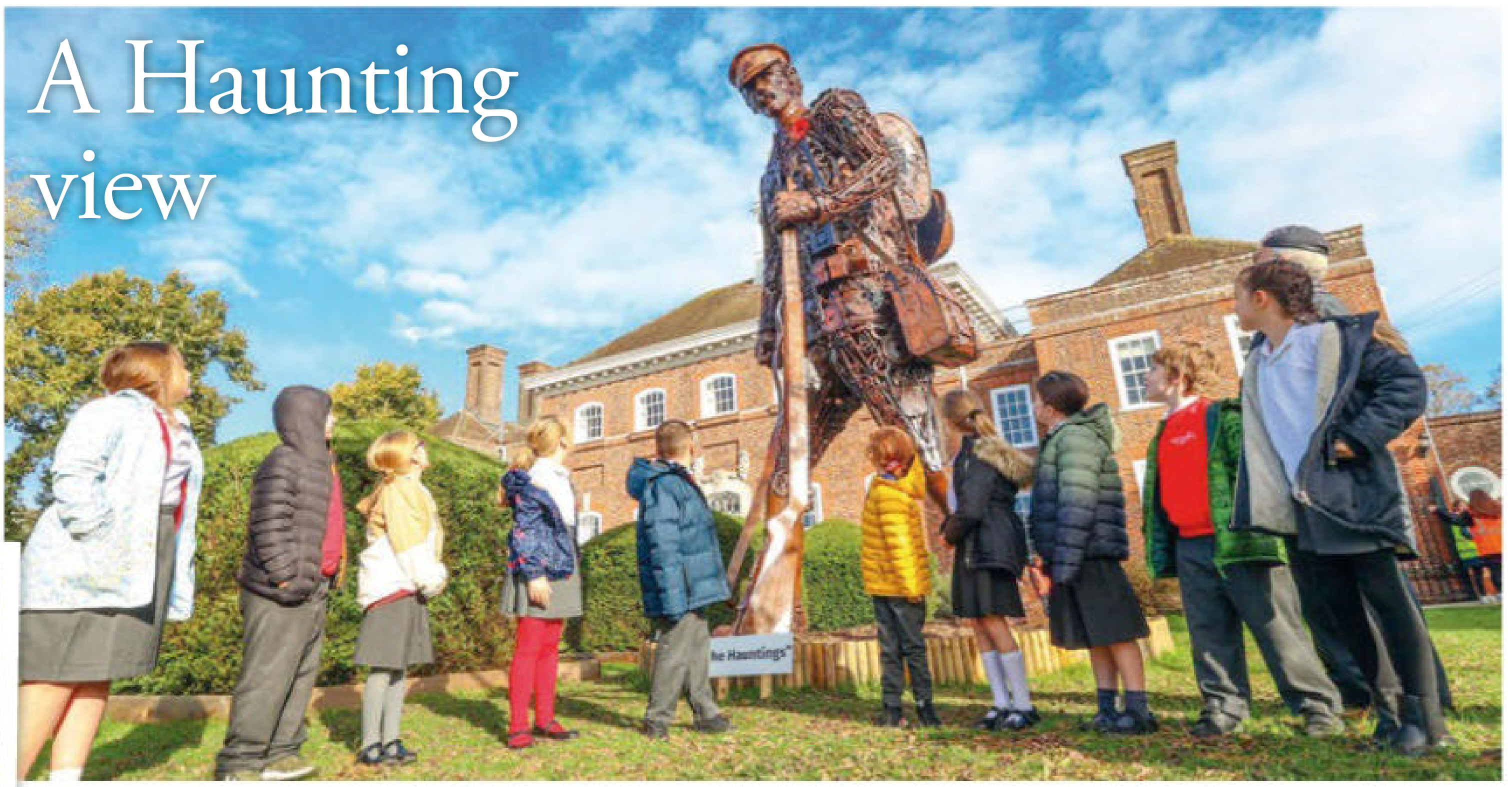
Following its very successful and popular Platinum Project to commemorate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the RSCM is once again inviting choirs across the UK, the Commonwealth and beyond to join in song to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III by learning and singing *The Mountains shall bring peace.*

Choirs and choral groups are invited to share their rehearsals and performances on social media using the hashtag #singfortheking

Further information about the project where choirs can also register their performance can be found at:

- *www.rscm.org.uk/singfortheking*

A Haunting view



SPENCER MULHOLLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

A six-metre-high statue in the grounds of Antrobus House in Amesbury commemorates the thousands of soldiers who left these shores between 1914 and 1918 never to return.

Made out of horseshoes, nuts, bolts, and scrap metal, it was commissioned by Jo Oliver and designed and created by Martin Galbavy and Chris Hannam of Dorset Forge and Fabrication. The statue was seen by Phil Monk, a trustee of Antrobus House at The Great Dorset Steam Fair in August 2018, he was taken aback by the striking resemblance to Lieutenant Edmund Antrobus of the 1st battalion, The Grenadier Guards, who left for the front on October 4, 1914 and was killed in action weeks later on October 24 1914, just outside Ypres in Belgium, his body was never found.

The Hauntings is on loan to Antrobus House until the end of April, to discover more about his story:

- *www.antrobushouseamesbury.co.uk*

Emily speaks out for Duke's award

Emily Palmer from Marlborough has been named as a Duke of Edinburgh's Award UK Youth Ambassador

She joins a cohort of just 35 other DofE participants and award holders who will advocate for young people within the charity and wider community throughout the year.

Together they will work to design and deliver campaigns and help shape the direction of the DofE by sharing their expertise on key issues impacting young people across the UK.

The DofE recruited its first panel of youth ambassadors in 2021, as part of its commitment to put young people at the heart of its work, supporting them to champion and represent the charity at events and panel discussions and make young people's voices heard at the highest levels.

Emily started her DofE aged 14 to broaden her horizons outside of her studies. She was an accomplished athlete, representing her region at basketball. However, everything changed during her Gold award, when she went into hospital following an accident and had potentially lifesaving surgery. She spent the next two-and-a-half-years learning to walk again. Incredibly, Emily has now completed her Gold expedition. She says that seeing the finish line in the distance was not the end of a four-day challenge, it was the end of her two-and-a-half-year journey of recovery.

Speaking on her appointment Emily said: "At 24, I didn't know if I could finish or not, but found a way, and I'd love everyone to know that no matter what challenges they face, they're just as good a candidate as anyone else."

The DofE is a non-competitive, personal challenge that gives all young people the chance to discover new passions, broaden their horizons and make a difference on issues that matter to them. Young people develop vital skills, confidence, and resilience to help them take on challenges and fulfil their potential.

In 2021/22, more than 321,000 young people started their DofE – the highest figure in the charity's 66-year history.

- *DofE.org*

Descendants of Marion and Ford Family descendants.

Lea Kindertransport refugee honoured

The community of Lea has commemorated the life of local resident Franziska Marion Lessa (known as Marion), who found refuge in Lea, when she fled Germany during World War II.

Marion was born in Berlin and came to Britain via the Kindertransport, where she stayed in Lea with the Ford family, who were very kind to her, and she attended the Lea & Gardson CE Primary School.

The honour was bestowed as part of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) 80 Trees for 80 Years project. A national campaign, to mark the organisation's 80th anniversary, featuring the planting native oak trees up and down the UK, marking places that were important to Jewish refugees who found sanctuary in Britain from Nazi persecution in Europe during and after WW2, as a tribute to Jewish refugees and the remarkable contribution that they have made to British society, and a way of giving back to the places which became their home.

Marion's direct descendants were joined at the tree planting, by members of the Ford family, who had not met each other until this day. Alongside family and loved ones, Lea & Gardson acting headteacher, Sian Alderson, chair of governors John Wallace, North Wiltshire constituency MP James Grey and AJR representatives Clara Burger and Greta gathered with local residents, to honour Marion's life.

Next to the tree, a time capsule was buried containing the *AJR 80 Years* journal issue and documents as well as photographs about the life of Marion Lesser. Her full testimony has been captured by The AJR Marion Lesser (ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk)

Speaking about the project, Michael Newman, The AJR CEO said, "It enables the AJR to give back to and create a living legacy within the country that became home to the Jewish refugees. We hope these 80 special trees will be appreciated by future generations and provide natural habitats for other native species for many decades to come."

- *For more information about The AJR and 80 Trees for 80 Years project: ukholocaustmap.org.uk*

Marion Lesser's great-granddaughter.

It is time to get your entry in for the Best Kept Village

Entries are welcomed from villages large, medium and small across the county – and anyone from a village can enter. You don't have to be a member of a parish council to enter your village.

CPRE Wiltshire's branch chair, Anne Henshaw, said: "We're very excited to be launching the competition this year, and are looking forward to many more entries. Wiltshire has many beautiful villages and I know how much previous winners value the recognition this competition brings."

Anyone in a village can pull an entry together and coordinate preparations for judging – it doesn't have to be led by the parish council. All entrants need to submit is one form, a map, and a short village report and to let their parish council know they are entering. Entries need to be in to CPRE Wiltshire no later than April 21.

The judges consider presentation – tidiness, absence of litter and evidence of community spirit and involvement – but do not award marks for the beauty of buildings, otherwise the same villages might win every time. Last year's winners were Whiteparish, Hindon and Rushall. The winner of winners was Bratton.

The first round of judging in the 2023 competition will take place from May 15 to June 11.

- *Find out more on CPRE Wiltshire's website www.cprewiltshire.org.uk/ or by contacting CPRE Wiltshire by email admin@cprewiltshire.org.uk or telephone 01380 722157.*

Brave soles walk on hot coals

An incredible £27,000 was raised by fearless fundraisers in Salisbury's Guildhall Square when they walked on hot coals or broken glass in support of Salisbury Hospice Charity. The charity previously hosted a fire walk back in 2021 but this year they added an extra challenge for dare-devils with the glass element.

Participants had an hour training session before the walk, which was organised and conducted by the UK Firewalk, a leading fire walk company.

Those taking part and spectators were also treated to an unforgettable fire performance by Steamship Circus.

In total 83 people took part with the youngest participant 16 years old and the eldest 78.

- *salisburyhospicecharity.org.uk*

WILTSHIRE SCENE

King Charles meets Ukrainian recruits who are training here in the county

THE KING watched a training exercise by recruits who are undertaking a five-week combat course before returning home to fight in Ukraine.

His Majesty, who was accompanied by the British Army's chief of general staff, General Sir Patrick Sanders was given a brief outline of the training being delivered before witnessing a demonstration of some of the skills the recruits are learning.

General Sir Patrick Sanders said: "It was an honour to join His Majesty The King in meeting Ukrainian recruits.

This is an international training effort being led by the UK and partner nations and has seen more than 10,000 Ukrainian recruits complete the 35 day programme."

His Majesty met many of the Ukrainian recruits and their interpreters. The King also spoke to some of the military personnel from 1st Battalion Irish Guards and the Ranger Regiment who are delivering the training, along with those who have joined forces with the British Army, including instructors from the New Zealand, Australian and Canadian forces.

Company second in command, 1st Battalion The Irish Guards, Captain Freddie Bradshaw said: "To hear that The King was coming to visit today was very exciting, not only for the Ukrainian recruits but also for those of us who are training them. It means a lot to us all to know that he is interested in what is taking place here."

The Ukranians are being taught how to survive in a hostile environment with a focus on basic fieldcraft, medical care, marksmanship, and weapon handling.

Most of the recruits have little or no military experience when they arrive on the course, though some have experience fighting on the frontline. WL

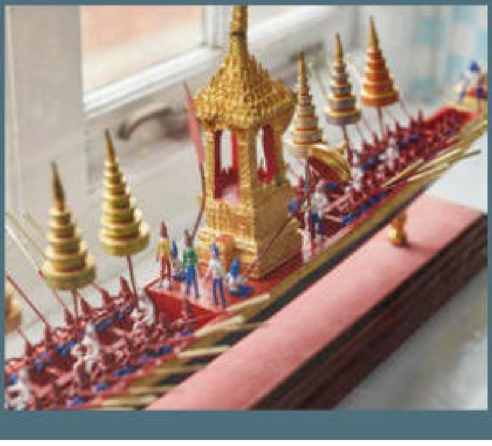
King Charles III discusses the training event with General Sir Patrick Sanders.

The King meets Ukranian soldiers and interpreters.

The King talks with soldiers from New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

His Majesty met a number of the recruits and international military personnel.

The King talks to the soldiers who he watched taking part in the exercise.



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10 am to 5 pm (last entry 4pm)
House & Garden | £9 Garden Only | £3.50
Under 12s | Free

TUESDAY
Guided Tours only, Pre booking advised
10 am to 3 pm, on the hour | £13

WEDNESDAY
Closed

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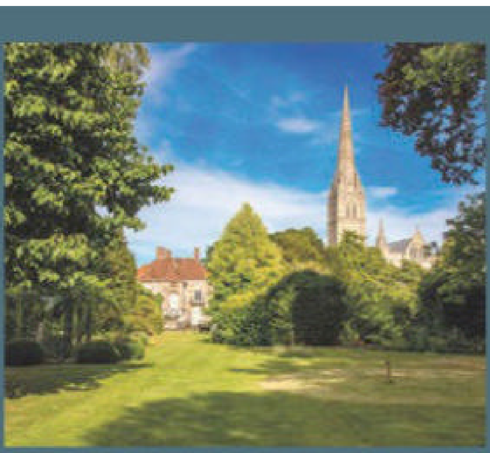
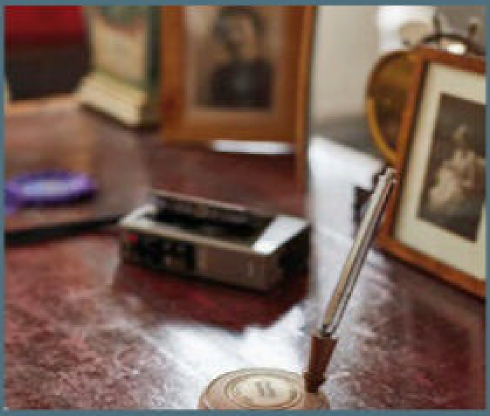
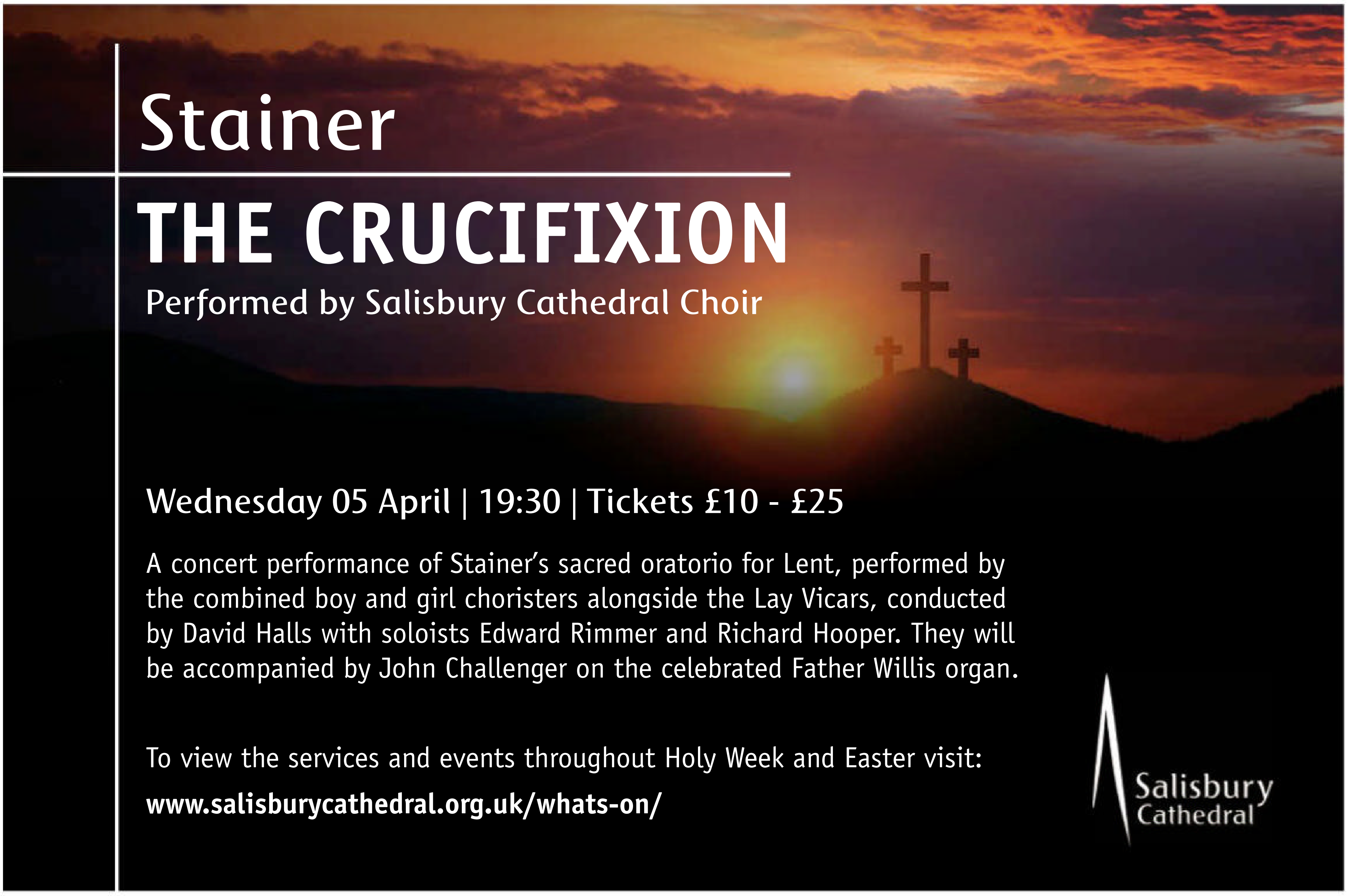
WWW.ARUNDELLS.ORG



Stainer

THE CRUCIFIXION

Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir

Wednesday 05 April | 19:30 | Tickets £10 - £25

A concert performance of Stainer's sacred oratorio for Lent, performed by the combined boy and girl choristers alongside the Lay Vicars, conducted by David Halls with soloists Edward Rimmer and Richard Hooper. They will be accompanied by John Challenger on the celebrated Father Willis organ.

To view the services and events throughout Holy Week and Easter visit:
www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/whats-on/

Salisbury Cathedral

Calluna vulgaris Wood Close

Tim Croall

Arts marketeer and musician destined to settle in the south of the county.

ALTHOUGH ORIGINALLY from South Wales, I was destined to end up in Wiltshire.

As a nine-year-old, returning from a family holiday in the south of England, we stopped off in Salisbury where my parents took me and my brother to Salisbury Cathedral to show us the tomb of a distant relative – George Sydenham, former Archdeacon of Sarum and Chaplain to Kings Henry VII and VIII – tucked away in the north aisle, behind the pulpit. I didn't know then that decades later I would make Wiltshire my home.

For someone lucky enough to be brought up with a love of music, theatre, history and the outdoors, Wiltshire is the perfect county for me.

Following stints working in the arts and entertainment venues in Wales, Devon and London, a career opportunity arose as head of marketing at Salisbury Playhouse.

The Playhouse was considered one of the country's leading theatres; famous for the list of illustrious actors and directors who had worked there, for the high quality of its productions and its fiercely loyal audiences. Before long, I was packing up my belongings in Canary Wharf and taking the A303 to Wiltshire. Quite a culture shock!

It gives me great pride that, during my time at the Playhouse, audience numbers were consistently above the national industry average and that we won Most Welcoming Theatre at the prestigious UK Theatre Awards.

Furthermore, there isn't another theatre in the country where, two minutes from the door, down quirky Water Lane, you can find yourself literally in a Constable painting, surrounded by fields and sheep, with a view of the great Gothic cathedral.

Five years ago the Playhouse merged with Salisbury Arts Centre and the International Arts Festival to form Wiltshire Creative. It was both thrilling and challenging to be part of launching this flagship model for the Arts Council.

Several of the productions I had the pleasure of working on taught me about Wiltshire's history. From the stage premiere of William Golding's *The Spire* and Barney Norris' touching First World War love-letter to the county *Echo's End* to, more recently, *Imber: You Walk Through*, an audio-visual experience about the 'lost' village on the edge of Salisbury Plain.

The pandemic brought huge challenges. The arts industry was hit particularly badly and for me, with venues literally shut overnight, redundancy loomed. But as the saying goes, every cloud…

It's true that you miss something more if you can't have it and many of us will have missed the joy of the arts – the shared experience of going to concerts or the cinema, visiting galleries or being part of a performance group. Or maybe we found comfort in using the unexpected free time to become more creative at home. I know my piano had never been played so much and my garden never looked so good.

For me, the fallout from the pandemic gave me the resolve to seek out opportunities where I could use my skills and passion in new ways.

Joining the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain last year as their head of communications has combined my career with my love of music. As I write this, we are preparing for our 40th anniversary concert at the Royal Albert Hall, featuring over a thousand young voices.

Alongside this, freelance work with other arts organisations has taken me to venues in Southampton, Leeds, Bath and Exeter. But my most recent work has been much closer to home… at Salisbury Cathedral.

Working with the passionate and dedicated team at the cathedral has been a joy; playing a small part in sharing the wonders of this important place of worship, international visitor attraction and events venue.

When not working I'm still discovering the county. When I first arrived 15 years ago a colleague said there were two places I must visit – Heale House Gardens in the Woodford Valley and The Compasses Inn at Chicksgrove. Both have remained firm favourites, along with 'new' discoveries such as Messums gallery at Tisbury, the landscape around Avebury and the Chalke Valley History Festival.

I now live in Wilton where, during lockdowns, I was grateful to be able to walk and run around the nearby fields, through the atmospheric Grovely Woods or over the valley to Old Sarum. I enjoy the spirit of community, the mix of pubs, independent businesses, history and landscape. Perhaps all that is great about Wiltshire is captured in Wilton, its original county town.

At the end of last year, working at the cathedral, I was invited to read at the famous Darkness to Light Advent service. As I sat in the stillness of the nave, preparing to read, I thought of my distant relative nearby. It's funny how life turns out. WL

Lieutenant General
Sir Andrew Gregory
KBE, CB, DL

Sir Andrew Gregory is Wiltshire's new Vice Lord Lieutenant. He tells Gary Lawrence the 'tremendous honour' is just the latest chapter of a life in service of Queen and Country.

ONE OF the first duties a new Vice Lord-Lieutenant has to consider is getting measured for the ceremonial uniform but that's already ticked off Andrew Gregory's list. "I can get my Blues' jacket adjusted," he says, which after 35 years in the military is no surprise.

Andrew, who lives in Salisbury, takes over the role from William Wyldebore-Smith (profiled in the January issue of *Wiltshire Life*) after little more than two years as a Deputy Lieutenant. "It's a tremendous honour to be asked to serve with Sarah Troughton, the Lord-Lieutenant," he says.

"What she is very keen for us to do is being as much a part of the life of the county as possible and by doing that we can take back a greater understanding of where some of the challenges are.

Above: Sir Andrew Gregory and his wife Sally at their home in Salisbury.

"We are not a political organisation, and nor should we ever be so, but the more we can feed in and influence the better. Wiltshire is such a diverse county with magnificent history, wonderful scenery, delightful communities and yet, like all parts of the United Kingdom, areas of deprivation. To outsiders, Wiltshire can be perceived merely as a nice shire county, forgetting that some areas need additional support. The Lieutenancy can help bring that to wider attention."

He joined the army after gaining an engineering degree at Cambridge and working for his sponsor, The Metal Box Co, as a shift foreman at a paint can factory in Hull. "It was a very different environment in the late seventies, especially in east Hull," he recalls "It was a closed shop and people had worked there for 30 or 40 years. I was 21 and I learned a great deal but I hope they learned something from me too."

It was perhaps not such a huge leap of imagination or ambition for him to choose a life in uniform. His father, Lt Colonel Dick Gregory, a Captain in the Royal Artillery, was wounded on D-Day after landing on Sword Beach with the 2nd Battalion the Warwickshire Regiment. He made it just south of Pegasus Bridge on the afternoon of June 6, 1944 before his tank was destroyed by a shell. He spent two years recovering in hospital.

Andrew says: "He hadn't met my mother at the time, but she was working at Eisenhower's headquarters near Portsmouth, moving the markers on the plotting table. Unbeknown to her one of them contained her future husband."

But if he thought his uniformed pedigree would ensure a warm welcome at the army recruitment office in Hull he was in for a disappointment. "The recruiter was an old school corporal and he took one look at me and said 'sorry, we're full'," he says.

Undeterred he applied for officer training and, after a gruelling examination at officer selection in Westbury ("I think I was awful but somehow I got through it," he recalls), he was accepted at Sandhurst.

A year later he was an uncertain Royal Artillery officer on the border of East and West Germany in the chilly depths of the Cold War, trying to stay out of the way of bombardiers and sergeants who were frantically loading lorries with munitions and equipment for exercises involving 30,000 troops.

"I realised I was getting in the way so I went back to my troop office and spoke to the sergeant major," he recalls. "I said 'I can see people are really busy, tell me what I should be doing'. He replied 'don't worry sir, you'll be useful one day'."

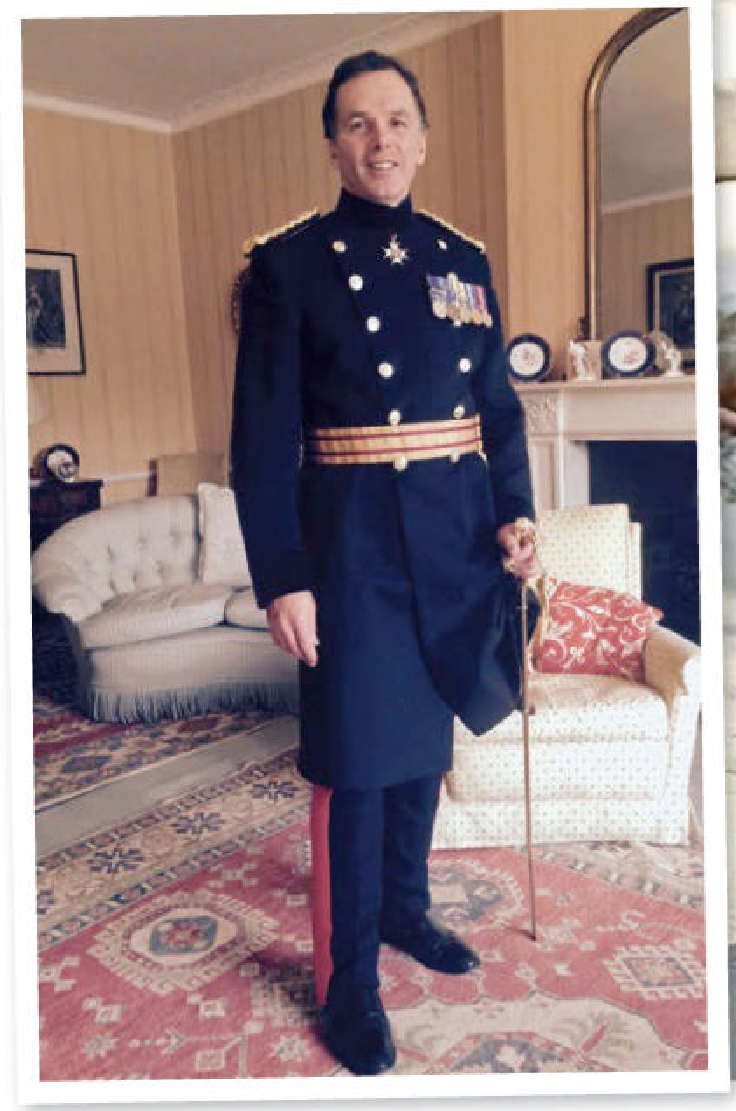
Despite the wake-up call he established himself as a natural leader and moved from promotion to promotion. It was during his spell in Germany he met his wife Sally, who was head of infants in a primary school for military families in the garrison.

"We met at a party and were engaged after six weeks," he recalls. "She is not from a military background and working with the army was quite a culture shock. But she effectively subjugated her career to mine and we have moved together and as a family. She and our two boys have had to 'reinvent' themselves a number of times."

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 changed the political landscape and for Andrew heralded a new phase of soldiering. "Defence sought a 'Peace Dividend' with the demise of the Warsaw Pact," he says. "I had a job

Right: Sir Andrew Gregory with son Rupert who has followed in his military footsteps and is a Royal Artillery captain.

Below: Ready for another ceremonial occasion in his Blues.



Above: Sir Andrew Gregory marching in the parade at The Queen's funeral last September, a day tinged with personal sadness for his family.

Above right: Sir Andrew Gregory with the Royal Artillery commemorating the end of the First World War.

in the Ministry of Defence as a major in the early 90s, reducing the army from a regular strength of 160,000 to 120,000 – today its below 80,000. Many of us were asking 'what are we going to be doing? There's no threat'.

"If somebody had said to me that, 30 plus years on, British armed forces would have fought two operations in Europe – Bosnia and Kosovo – liberated Kuwait, been engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, East Timor and many other places, I wouldn't have believed it."

That was underlined when, in 2003, as deputy commander of First United Kingdom Armoured Division, he was tasked to plan for and then go to Kuwait as a potential invasion of Iraq loomed.

"Professionally that was where I think I brought together the sum of my training and experience," he says. "I do believe delivering that was probably professionally the most satisfying thing I've done."

He was aware then how divisive the invasion was back home. "Sally and I exchanged letters, known as blueys, daily so I knew what was happening," he recalls. "I knew the UN had been petitioned and a million people had marched in London against the war.

"I come back to the fact we live in a democracy and the military must follow the orders of the democratically elected government. The ruling by the attorney general, who said the orders were legitimate, was critical so then our job was to execute them. You have to put whatever else is going on aside, be outside the politics, and trust the government."

He is unequivocal in his view of the conflict. "Do I think the Iraqis had chemical weapons? Yes. Did we find them? We did not. Do I think we should have invaded Iraq? I do not. Do I think we should have gone in to Afghanistan? I do. In my view terrorism was being exported from Afghanistan and was causing some of the atrocities that were affecting citizens of this country."

> 'I have chosen service and I do think that's important'

In 2016, after three years at the Ministry of Defence, Andrew retired from the army but his connection with the miliary endures through his role as the 32nd Master Gunner of St James Park, a post first established in the 1672 to site the cannons to protect the palaces of Westminster, Whitehall, and St James.

Nowadays it is more ceremonial and it brought Andrew into close contact with the Queen. "I've had a couple of audiences with her at Buckingham Palace for half an hour," he says. "It's a wow moment and scary because you think 'here's a lady who has done this job longer than I've been alive'."

The association led to a role in Westminster Abbey and in the parade at The Queen's funeral last year, although the honour was tinged with personal sadness. "It was a difficult day because Sally's father had died at the end of August and his funeral in Yorkshire was arranged for the same day, September 19," he says.

"My life has always been service and duty and you can't turn it on and off, Sally and I have missed Christmases and birthdays together and that's life in the military, but this was one of the most difficult days. It was a great privilege and emotionally difficult."

It's at this point that Sally breaks into the sombre moment to add mischievously: "Plus the fact that Andrew is not good at drill, he was dreading the occasion."

His post-army career has made perfect use of his experience, contacts and understanding as chief executive of SSAFA, the armed forces association providing support, refuge and opportunities for forces veterans and their families.

"We've been around for 138 years and we are financially sound but we are running at a deficit," he says. "We can't do that forever and closing the gap between expenditure and income is a very real challenge for us – demand is running at around 130 per cent of what it was last year.

"We also need to grow people's awareness of SSAFA, I am very proud it helps around 80,000 people each year."

He is also a governor of Sedburgh School in Cumbria, where his father once taught, a patron of Fighting With Pride, a new organisation supporting the military's LGTBQ+ community, and president of Tidworth Garrison Golf Club.

He acknowledges his new role as Vice Lord-Lieutenant is the next chapter of a life very much focused on doing the right thing for the people and communities he cares about. "If I look back at my life and the way it has panned out, I have chosen service and I do think that's important," he says.

"It has spanned the military, SSAFA, being a school governor and now the Lieutenancy, which is also about service to His Majesty and to the community, and I feel very comfortable with that." WL

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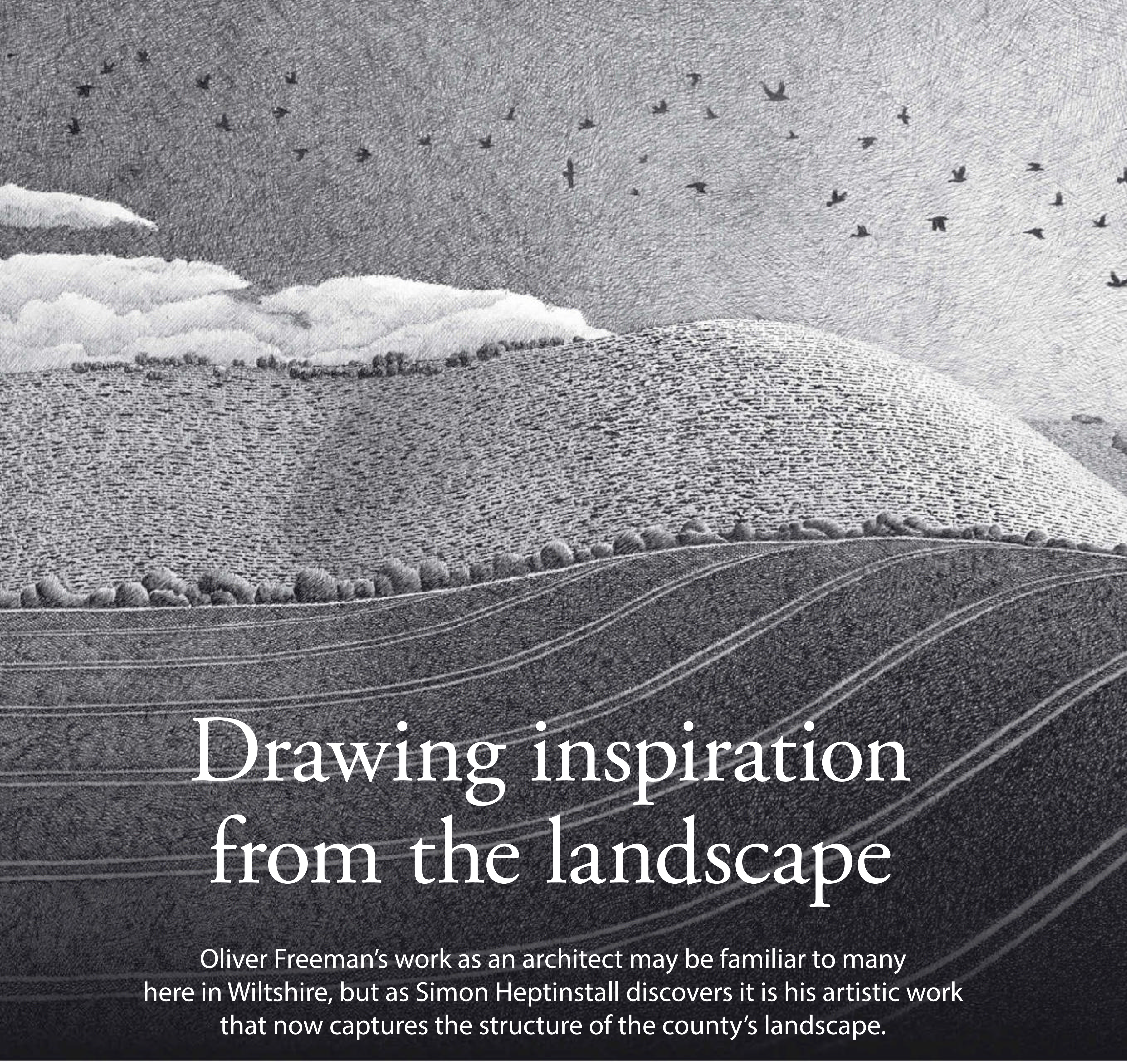


Above: Sunrise in the Pewsey Vale.

Drawing inspiration from the landscape

Oliver Freeman's work as an architect may be familiar to many here in Wiltshire, but as Simon Heptinstall discovers it is his artistic work that now captures the structure of the county's landscape.

IF YOU ask most artists about their back catalogue it might include some early sketches, experimental prints and maybe a couple of old sculptures.

Yes, Wiltshire artist Oliver Freeman has all that usual stuff in the wide drawers and shelves of his workshop in Etchilhampton – but he can also add something a little more concrete. Oliver can refer back to the whole town centre shopping quarter that he once designed.

That's because years ago Oliver penned the layout of the charming Old Swan Yard area of Devizes.

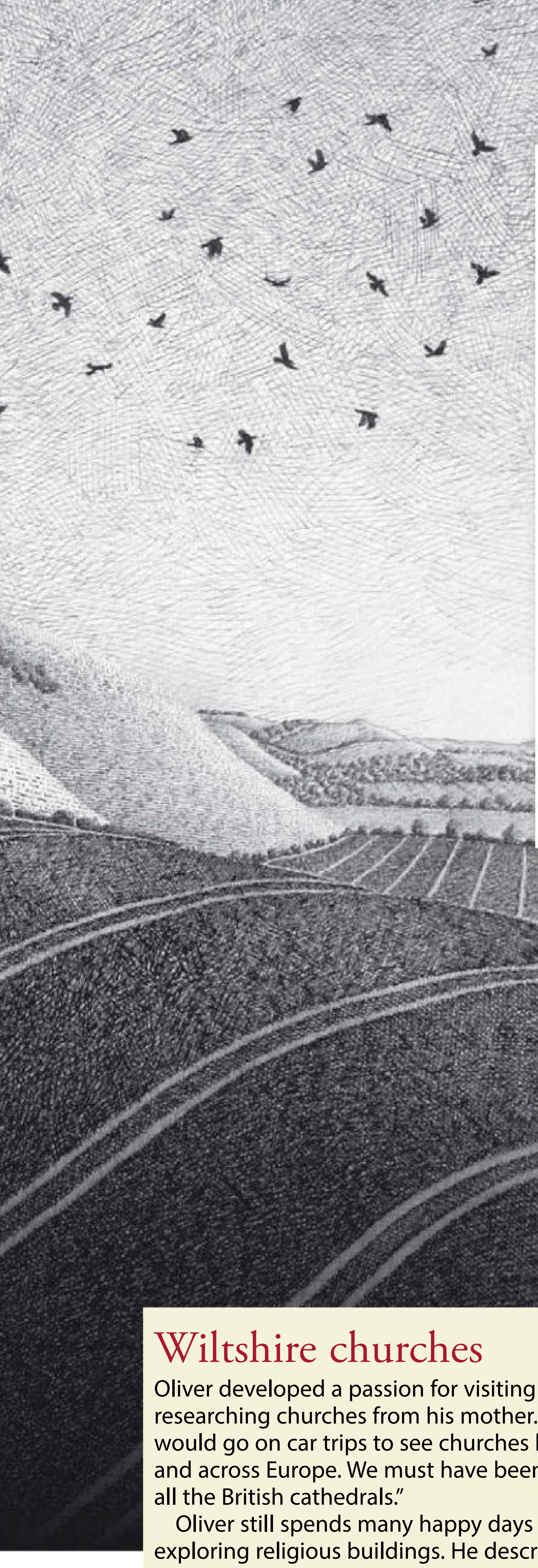
This little bijou area of alleys, arches and interesting small shops (including the White Chalk Gallery recently featured in *Wiltshire Life*) were imaginatively created from the outbuildings behind a furniture shop on the High Street (now Spirit Fashion). It is one of Oliver's most prominent legacies from his years working as a professional architect.

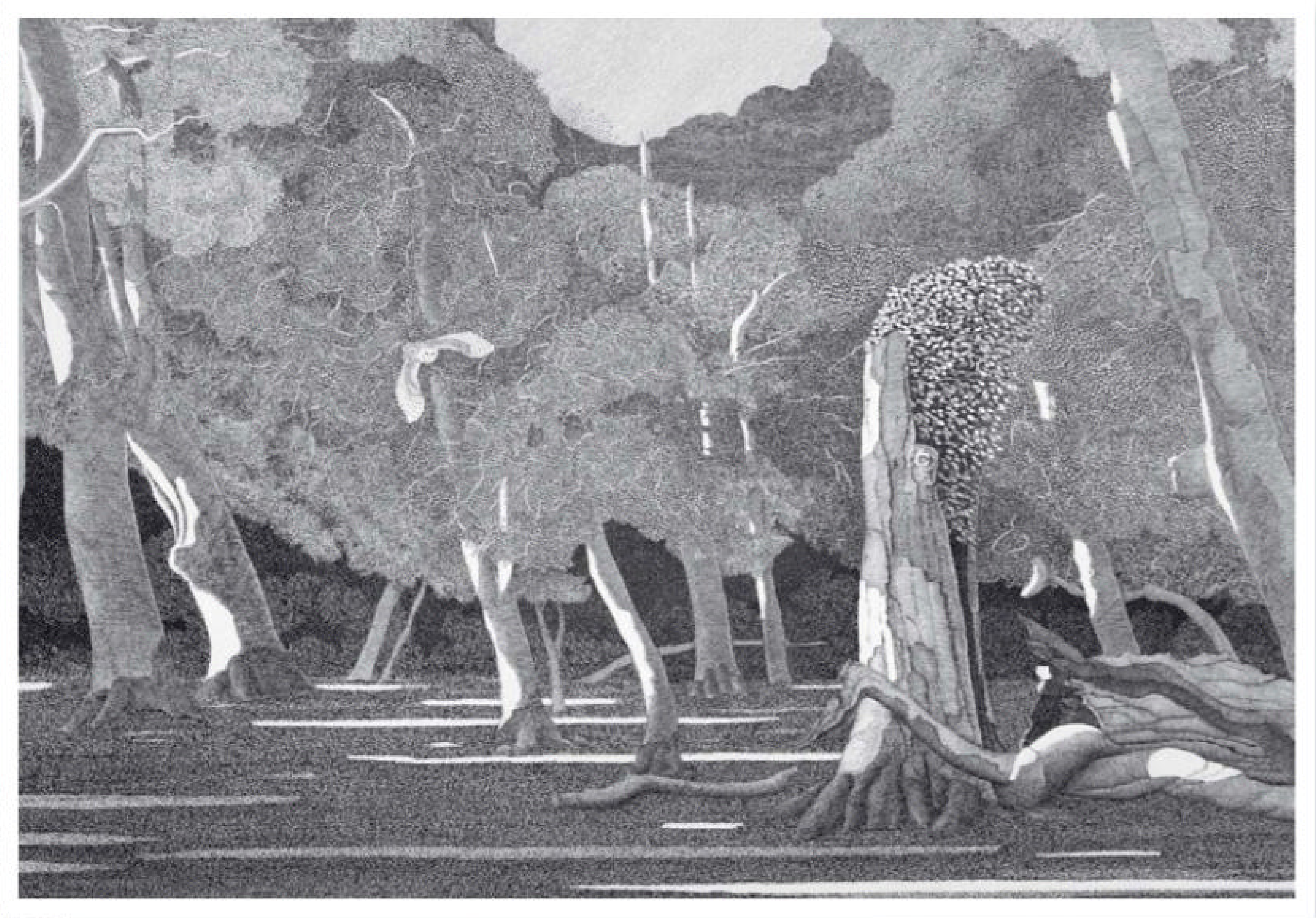
Wiltshire Life visited the talented architect, artist and 'church collector' (see panel) at his charming rambling thatched farmhouse between Devizes and Marlborough.

The house, of course, is another of Oliver's creations, a renovation of three derelict farmworker's cottages. Oliver and his wife Kate bought them from a local farmer at a property auction in the Bear Hotel in Devizes around 35 years ago.

Since then they have been "doing bits and pieces when we could afford it" – which includes acquiring bargains like the old Aga from the Spye Park Mansion in Bromham after it was destroyed by fire. The house is an attractive mix of old and new, including glass skylights in a traditional Wiltshire thatched roof.

The old concrete farmyard has been excavated and now the sunny house looks out over an acre-and-a-half of lawn and trees, with inspiring views right across the Vale of Pewsey.





Above: Owl in the New Forest.

An old milkshed in the trees alongside, of course, has become Oliver's art studio.

With this lovely workspace he has gradually phased out his former career, replacing it with painting and drawing. Along the way Oliver made the transformation from a well-known Wiltshire architect – to a successful artist.

He recently enjoyed a successful one-man show at the White Horse Gallery in Marlborough and has exhibited in the Royal Academy in London and the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol. His work often sells for more than a thousand pounds, some for a lot more.

It's a far cry from his upbringing in Gloucestershire and the Home Counties. In Oliver's family, men usually worked in the mining industry.

"I was the odd one out," he says, although his mother had been to art school. "She didn't do much art when I was growing up but perhaps these things come to you via osmosis." What he did pick up from his mother was a love of visiting churches that some would say verges on an obsession (see panel).

Oliver originally trained as an architect at the Architectural Association in London in the sixties. "I was old fashioned and liked bricks and mortar, not what the fashionable revolutionary

Wiltshire churches

Oliver developed a passion for visiting and researching churches from his mother. "We would go on car trips to see churches here and across Europe. We must have been to all the British cathedrals."

Oliver still spends many happy days exploring religious buildings. He describes it as "collecting churches".

"I'm not particularly religious. I missed having a church wedding myself and got married in a registry office. But I love seeing inside churches. It's not about dates and who is buried where. Instead, it's about the feeling of space and the atmosphere.

"I like to go inside, take photos and read a bit about it. I like to research about them at home too. It's a feeling of it as rooted building. It has been there so long doing things, being an important part of a community.

"When my children were growing up I'm afraid I made them stop at churches all the time. Of course they used to moan."

Oliver delved into his church collecting expertise to offer Wiltshire Life readers his favourite lesser-known churches in the county. How many of these do you know?

Inglesham (near Lechlade, just inside Wiltshire). "This is small redundant church, saved by William Morris from any Victorian 'improvements'. It was mainly built around 1200, with some early 18th century box pews but unchanged since. It's like walking back in time. It's not to be missed."

Lydiard Tregoze

St Mary's church here served as the family church for the St John family that once owned Lydiard House. The village on the western edge of Swindon featured in the *Doomesday Book* and now it's church is an "oddity" according to Oliver, crammed with monuments and relics, including medieval wall paintings. The Pevsner guide to Britain's historic buildings agrees, saying it is: "cram-full of enjoyable furnishings, richer than any other of similar size in the country".

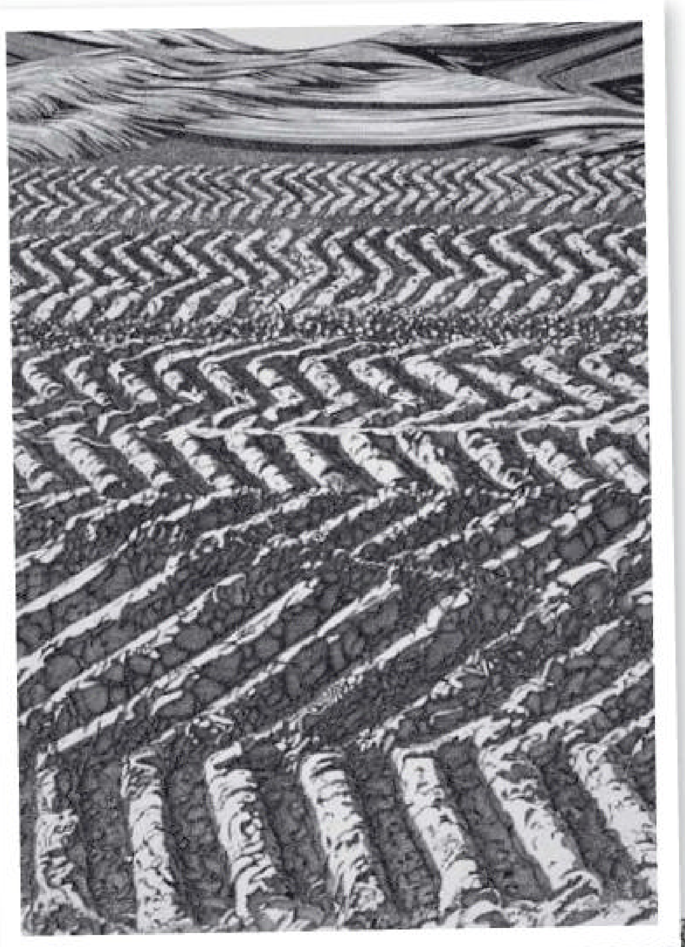
Alton Barnes/Alton Priors

St Mary's, Alton Barnes, and All Saints, Alton Priors, stand within a few hundred yards of each other in the Vale of Pewsey, between the hillside white horse and the canal.

St Mary's is part Saxon and stands next to a yew tree that's 1,700 years old, while All Saints has an ancient atmosphere. Trapdoors in the floor lead to a mysterious buried sarsen stone underneath.

Bradford on Avon

The tall narrow atmospheric chapel of St Laurence is one of the most complete Saxon buildings of any kind in England. "Some churches just have it," says Oliver. "This one has been there for more than a thousand years."



thinking at the time. I was less interested in avant-garde ideas and ended up gravitating towards conservation of old buildings."

Throughout his architecture career Oliver continued to paint at home. He even took a three-year break to gain a first-class degree in Fine Art at Falmouth.

For a long time Oliver's art was mostly oil paintings of slightly surreal, big forms that were often based on trees or landscape.

"I like big pieces. Size creates a power of its own. But there is a downside: trying to carry big pieces around in my small car. So I've had to build a special roof rack on top of the car with bits of wood so I can cart the big pieces around."

His distinctive large pen-and-ink drawings are a more recent development. "About 2019 I started sliding into doing ink drawings in just black and white. If felt right and made life simpler."

Now Oliver mainly works with an old-fashioned dip pen, creating large pieces featuring Wiltshire trees or landscapes. "It means that a mistake is a real nightmare. I sometimes have to stick a piece of paper over it and draw on top." He shows me an example – but to me the 'repair' is seamless and invisible.

Wiltshire is clearly a major influence on Oliver's art. "I've a passion for the rolling landscapes and big skies. I like the trees and the fields. Often the Wiltshire landscape looks to me like the swell of the sea."

- *Oliver Freeman's studio will be open this July as part of the annual Marlborough Open Studios. For more information: marlboroughopenstudios.co.uk includes details about all the artists, their studios and opening times.*

Clockwise: Wiltshire Landscape - Tyre Tracks & Polythene; Split Yew, Alton Priors; Savernake Oak; Oliver Freeman at work in the studio.

Wiltshire woods

Oliver's art often features huge sculptural shapes of trees he has found exploring woods in the county. Here are his three favourite Wiltshire woods:

Savernake (east of Marlborough) "for the big old oaks and rotting decaying old trees showing their innards."

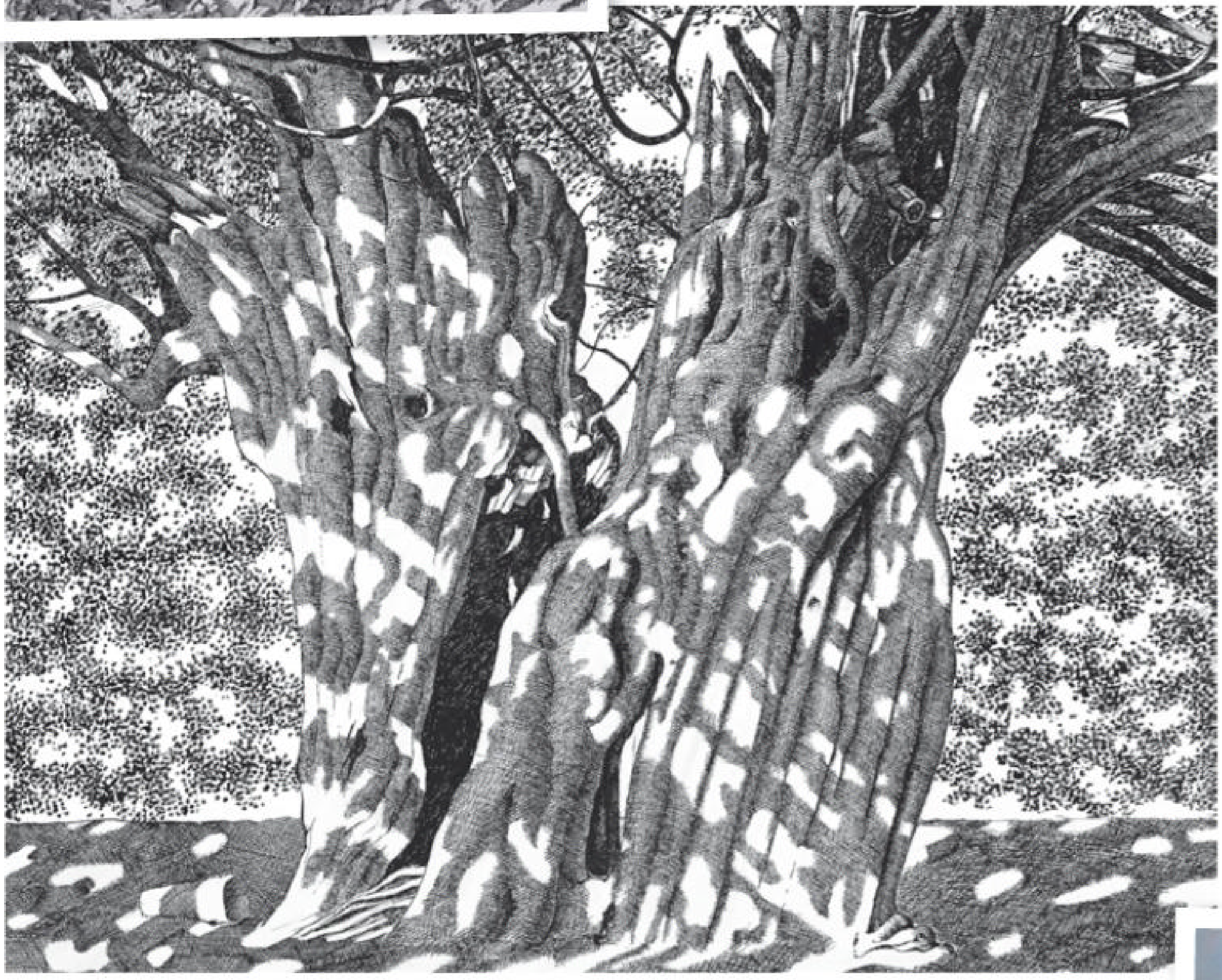
- *www.forestryengland.uk/savernake-forest*

West Wood, (west of Marlborough) "a more open beech woodland" famous for its bluebells in Spring and said to be the source of Stonehenge's sarsens.

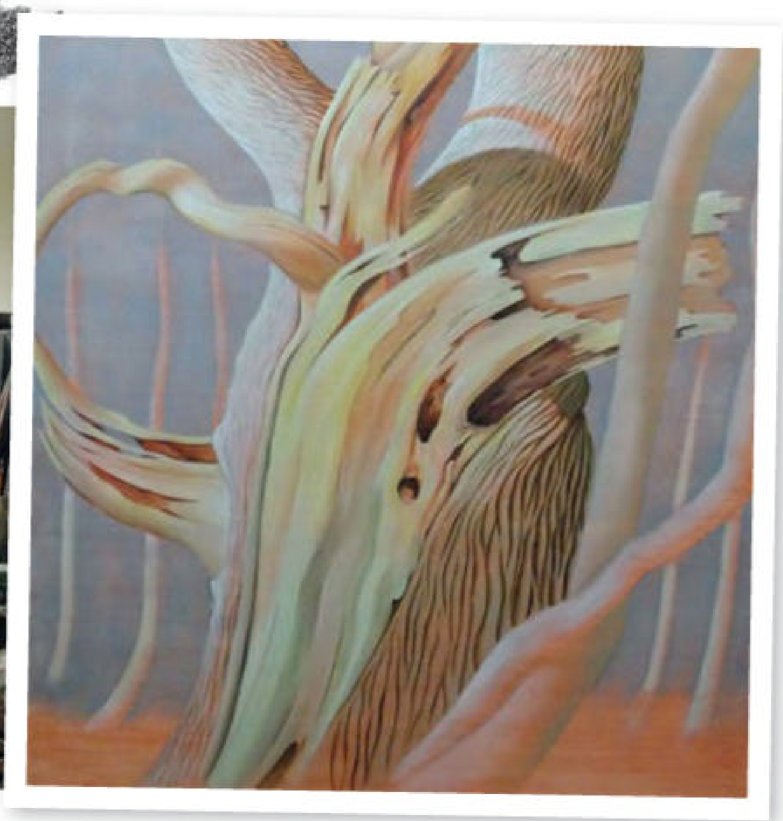
- *www.forestryengland.uk/west-woods*

Gopher Wood at Huish, a small old oak wood on the hill above Huish church with Iron Age barrows and amazing views from the top.

- *www.visitpewseyvale.co.uk/business-directory-2/gopher-wood-2/*



MICHAEL ANGOVE



A Love Letter to Wiltshire: an Exhibition of Paintings by Joanna May

Celebrating 20 years of the wildlife artist's work and recognising her commitment to the region's environment

18 March to 11 June 2023

See website for opening times
Children Free

Barn Owl and Crop Circle © Joanna May

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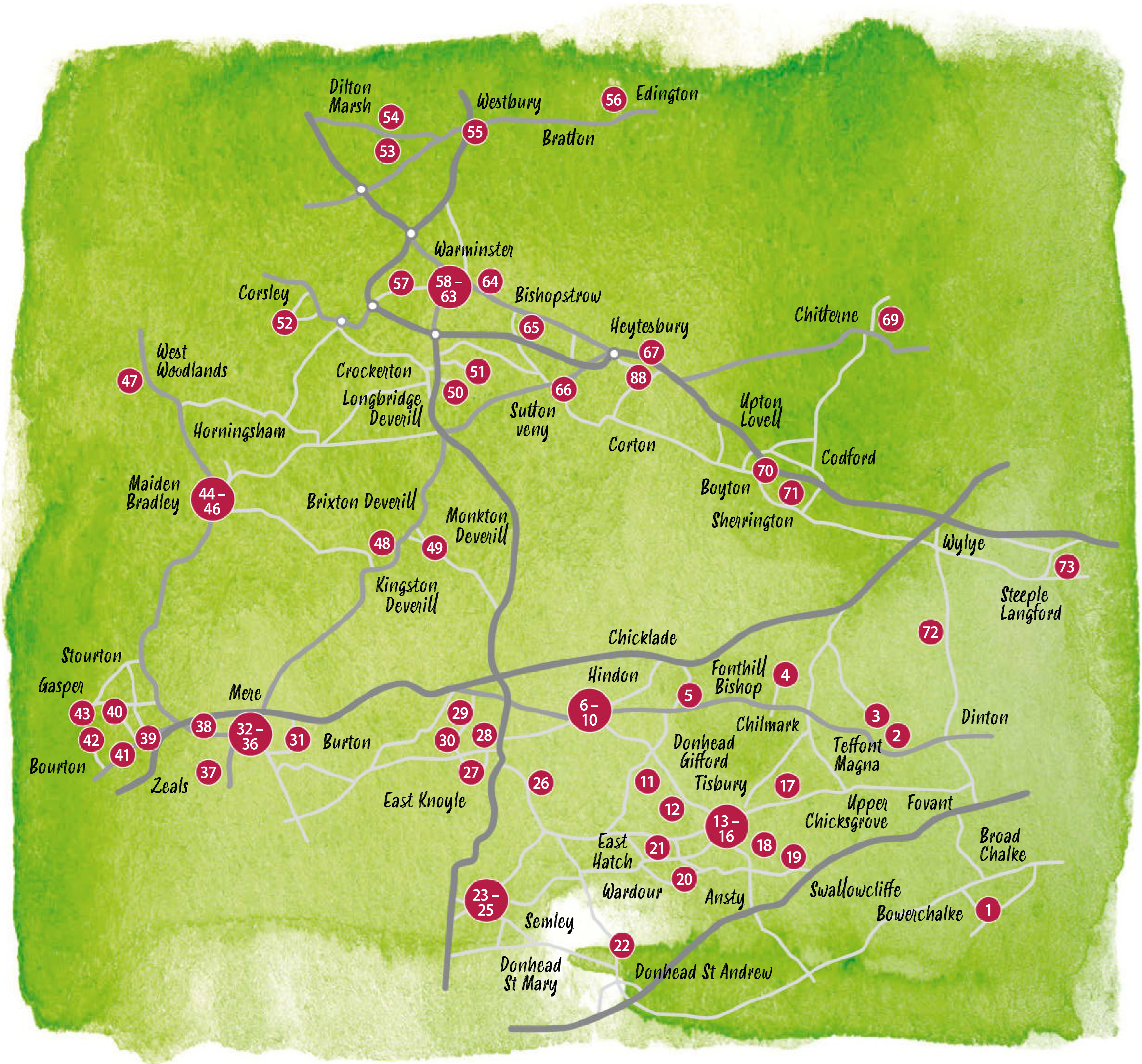
Salisbury Hospice Charity

Mapping out all aspects of art

With venues scattered across towns and villages, artists are once again opening their homes, barns, and studios to share their creative crafts. Rose Eva looks ahead to this vibrant biennnial event.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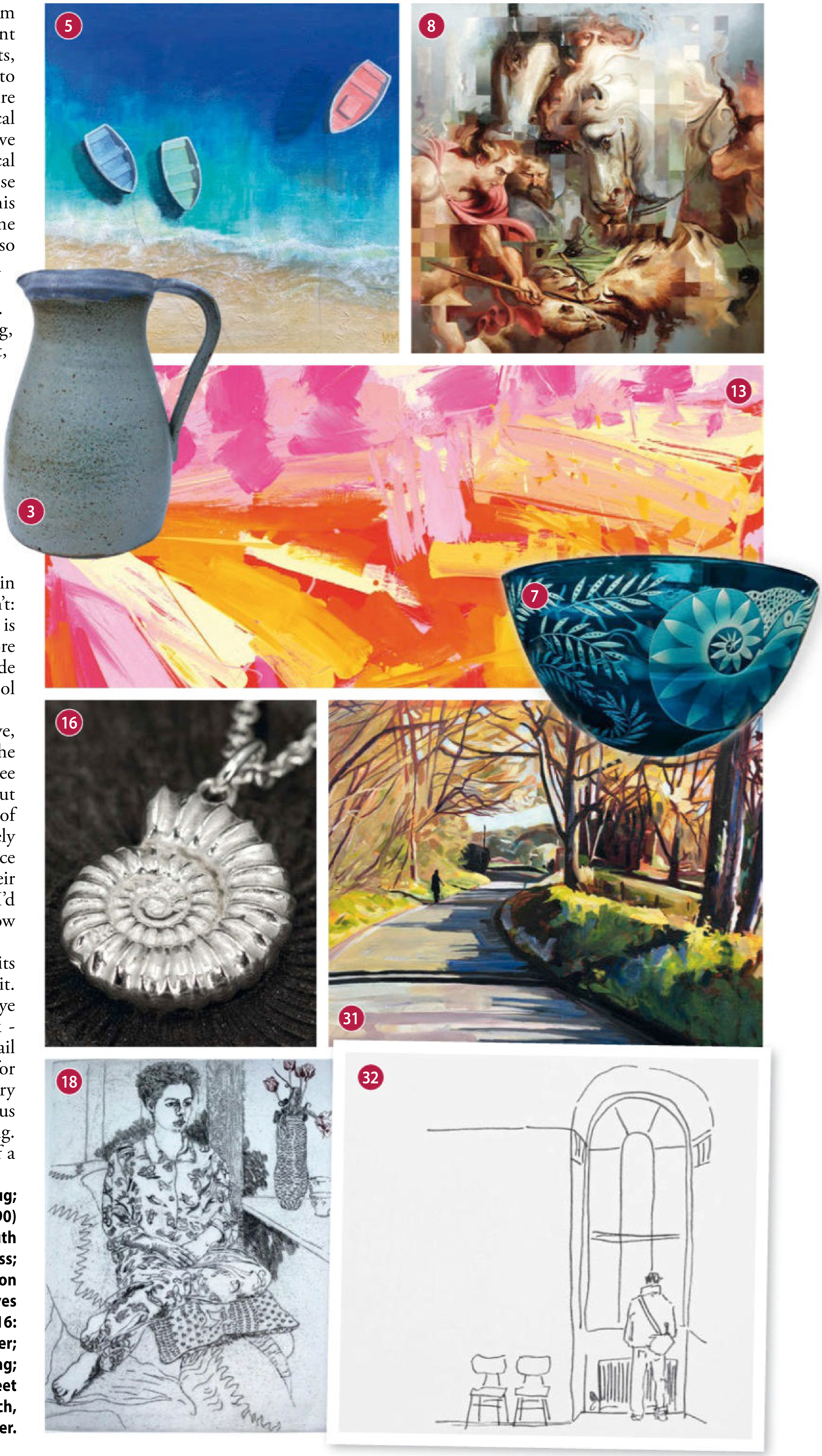
ART'S A funny thing. The term encompasses so many different things: there are the visual arts, which can be subdivided into fine art - painting, sculpture and so on, things that have no practical or commercial purpose – and decorative and applied arts – beautiful but practical pieces, made for a specific practical purpose (I know that architecture fits into this wonderful panoply, but for the life of me I cannot imagine where), but there's also the performing arts and literature, and no doubt other branches of the subject that I can't think of at the moment. It can be beautiful, ugly, challenging, thought provoking, uplifting and repellent, sometimes all at the same time.

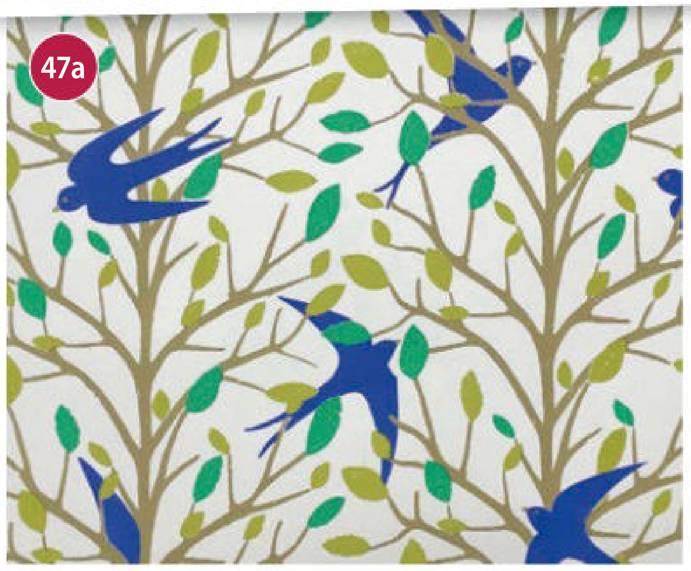
The Shorter Oxford Dictionary's definition of the word (or at least the first explanation at the head of one and a half columns of small print on the subject, on a very large page) is that art is a 'skill…; the application of skill according to aesthetic principles, esp. in the production of visible works of imagination, imitation, or design…; skilful execution of workmanship as an object in itself'. That sort of says it, but sort of doesn't: there can be art in things where no skill is evident – Picasso, for instance, found more art in children's drawings than in those made by people who'd spent years at art school studying the subject.

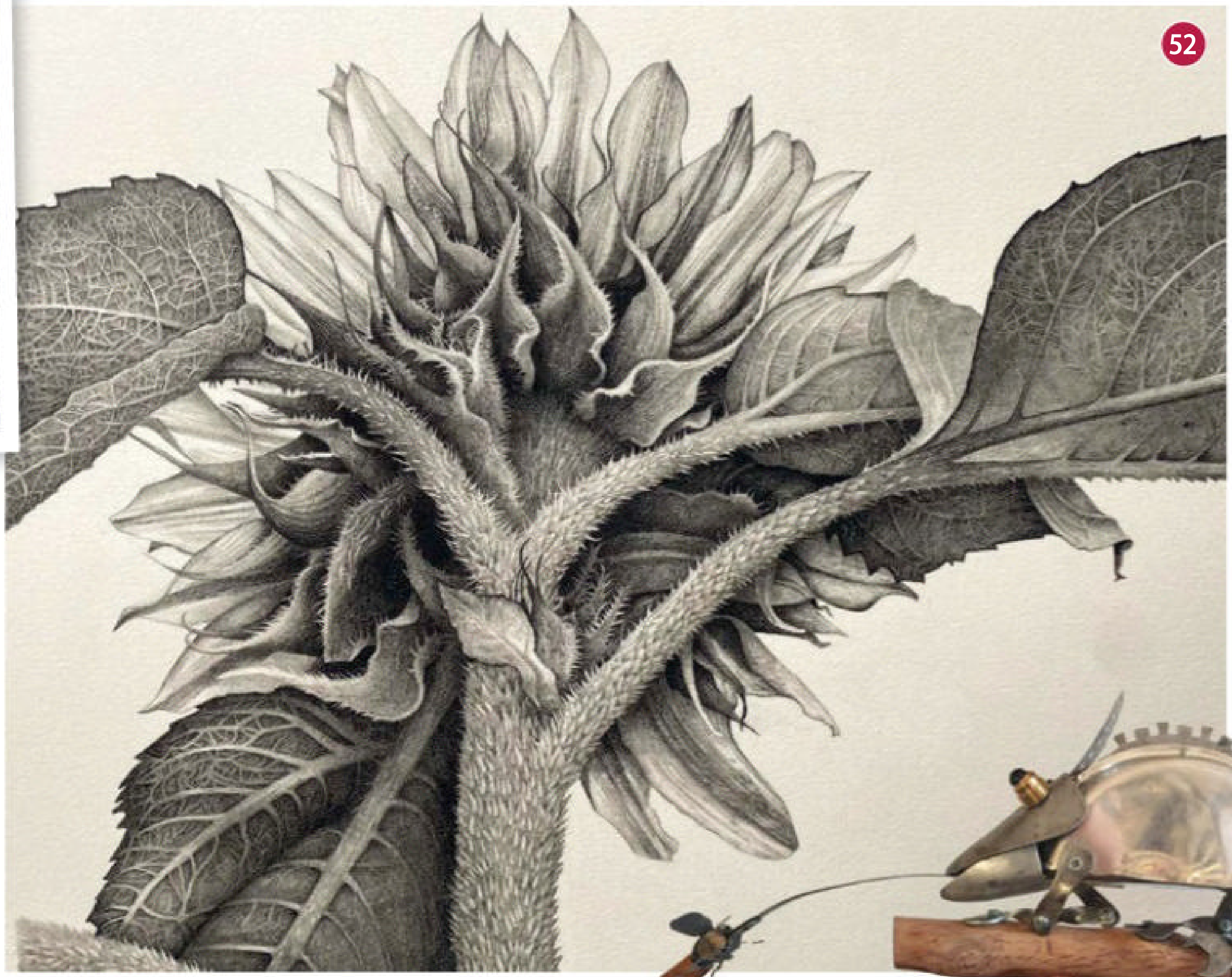
Art is completely subjective. What I love, you may hate. What this person sees as the quintessence of all art, that person may see as complete tat. That's what's so great about it. Fashions come and go, and the work of artists who died paupers can become hugely valuable – think of Van Gogh – and vice versa; some artists wildly famous during their lifetimes have disappeared without a trace. I'd lay odds there are quite a few artists alive now whose prices will one day nosedive…

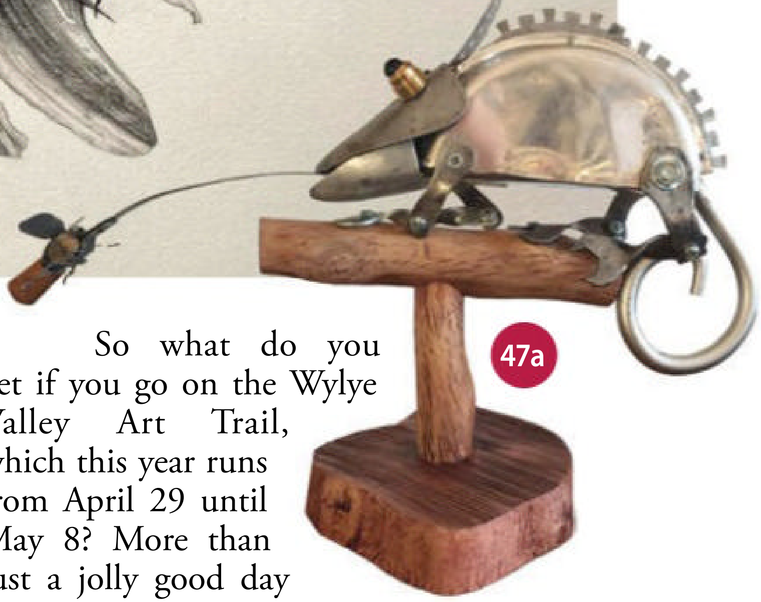
It's what I love about art, its complexity, its variety, the almost serendipitous nature of it. And that is also what I love about the Wylye Valley Art Trail. Thank goodness it's back - it's such a joy, a real fillip for spring. The Trail has been a feature of southwest Wiltshire for more than 20 years now, taking place every other year, brightening this most gorgeous corner of the county for 10 days in the spring. This year there's a rough diamond shape of a



Venue 3: Plaxy Arthur. Stoneware Jug; Venue 5:Mark Muspratt Williams (Studio 90) Gull's Eye View,oil on canvas; Venue 7: Ruth Dresman, Undersea, coloured and carved glass; Venue 8: Johnny Morant, Rubens Hunt, oil on canvas; Venue 13: Chris Edwick, Get ourselves back to the Garden, oil on canvas; Venue 16: Ladytree Designs Ammonite pendant silver; Venue 18: Patricia Low, Charlotte, etching; Venue 31.:Christopher Topham, Gasper Street (Stourhead) Autumn oil; Venue 32:. Evie Rich, Dad In London, pen on paper.







Venue 36: Steve Hawkins, The-Wylye 1, A5 Photobook; Venue 47a: Liza Saunders, Birds-and-Trees, silkscreen print; Venue 47a: John Bennett. Chameleon, metal & wood; Venue 52: Emma Lynham, Sunflower, drawing.

map of venues taking part on the Trail, from Dilton Marsh in the north, Steeple Langford in the east, Donhead St Andrew in the south to the wonderfully named Gasper in the west. There are around 70 of them with more than 250 exhibitors, each and every one different. There are landscape painters and installation artists, animal painters and abstract painters; there are stone sculptors and ceramicists, metalworkers and furniture makers; there are glass artists, mosaic artists and jewellers, textile artists and lacemakers – in other words, pretty much all aspects of art are covered by the artists on the Trail.

Some of the participants are brand new to the art game, others already have stellar careers; some are amateur, others make their living from what they do. Arabella Chapman, a 23-year-old graduate of the London College of Fashion and winner of the Wylye Valley Young Artist Award, is exhibiting her bold abstract paintings; Johnny Morant is a progressive figurative artist whose work featured at the 2022 Venice Biennale, while Anthony Connolly, a regular participant on the Trail, is the current president of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. Ruth Dresman's exquisite carved glass is in the collections of both The Queen and the Sultan of Brunei, Matthew Burt's clean and sensuous wooden furniture can be found in museums and cafes alike, while the children of Wardour Primary School are exhibiting as part of the Secret Wardour Group, and examples of their art are no doubt stuck up in every parent's kitchen.

More information

The Wylye Valley Art Trail runs from Saturday April 29 until Monday May 8, across southwest Wiltshire. Brochures for the Trail, with a map and descriptions of and directions to every venue (including What3Words) are available from Tourist Information Centres, arts centres, libraries and many shops, cafes, and pubs.
• wvat.co.uk

With such a range of artists it's pretty obvious that there's no selection process to take part in the Wylye Valley Art Trail. And a good thing too: who's to say that my judgement of what's good art, who should be selected and who rejected, is better than yours? We're back to that subjectivity thing. Instead, there's a committee of artist volunteers led by Nick Andrew, the founder of the Trail, organising things, sorting out the applications and the images, putting the Trail brochure together, getting the signage out to all the participants – everything short of sorting out the venues, in fact. Nick Andrew and his team of volunteers have been so successful over the years that the Wylye Valley Art Trail won the 2022 Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, one of the final awards made by The Queen before her death last September. As Nick Andrew says, "Achieving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is a fabulous honour and reflects profoundly on everyone involved in WVAT over the years, from the organising teams through to the participants". It really is a feather in their artistic caps.

So what do you get if you go on the Wylye Valley Art Trail, which this year runs from April 29 until May 8? More than just a jolly good day out - or days, as you haven't a hope in hell of getting to every venue in just one day. Quite apart from a jaunt around some of the most beautiful countryside this most gorgeous of counties has to offer, there's the amazing range of art and almost always the artist there to chat about it. If you're in the market to buy, there's something for every taste and price range, but you don't have to even think about buying if you don't want to: the point is to visit, and look, and appreciate. That's almost as important to the artists as making a purchase. Art is a solitary occupation, and artists can have a tendency towards introspection. Open studios events like the Wylye Valley Art Trail brings them blinking into the sunlight, and talking about what they've made to interested punters can be not only therapeutic and affirming but also creatively stimulating; describing why they did what can help an artist to understand their own creative processes, and open up other artistic avenues for exploration. Arabella Chapman, has said that winning the Young Artist Award, helping her with her costs so that she can participate in the Trail "feels like a door opening, it feels I can warrant giving my time to the thing I love. It makes me realise how important this sort of creativity is to me. It really helps me in the everyday: it makes me feel so happy". If that's not a validation of the therapeutic power of art, I don't know what is.

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Earthquake response

The devastating earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria may be thousands of miles away, but the shockwaves have been felt in Wiltshire among those who lost loved ones – and the people who have been moved to help. Gary Lawrence spoke to some of them

THE ROOM is usually filled with laughter and the hustle and bustle you'd associate with a thriving community hub but today, although it is no less busy, there is a hush as people work around three enormous piles of carboard boxes.

This is the Wiltshire Turkish Community Centre in Swindon where a vast collection of donated clothing and supplies dominates the ground floor of what has become the focal point of the response to an apocalyptic disaster. On February 6, at 4.17am local time, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked south east Turkey near the Syrian border, causing catastrophic damage and killing tens of thousands of people.

Tugba Altun was talking to a friend on the phone in Turkey when he told her 'an earthquake is happening'. She recalls: "I thought he was joking at first, it didn't seem real. After we ended the conversation I was sending messages all night trying to find out what was happening.

"I woke at 6am and thought it had been a dream until I saw all the messages on my phone from people here who were asking for help trying to contact their families."

In her role as leader of the centre's Woman Voice group she found herself at the centre of the scramble for information. Wiltshire is home to a Turkish community of around 4,000 people, the second largest in the UK.

"More than 50 per cent of their loved ones have died or missing and many of them don't know what has happened to their families," says Tugba. "More than half of the community have lost parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts. We are all just numb."

Many from Wiltshire had travelled to Turkey to see family for the half-term holiday, unaware that they were heading into disaster. "One lady went home for her father's funeral and died in the earthquake," says Tugba. "We have heard about a family whose house had survived the earthquake but it was damaged. It was snowing outside and they needed things to keep warm so they went back in and the building collapsed on them, it is so sad."

In those first surreal hours after the news had broken, even before the scale of the earthquake was known, Tugba said she realised there would be a need for emergency supplies. "I couldn't move, I kept asking myself if this was a dream but then I realised we needed to do something, so I started to talk to people about collecting donations," she says.

"At night the temperature is down to -12 so these people need warmth. We asked for coats, blankets and shoes, anything to cover them because we knew people would have lost everything."

She used her network to send out a plea for supplies and within hours bags and boxes of clothing began to arrive at the community

LEWIS INMAN, RE-ACT

RE-ACT in the remains of a street in the Hatay province of southern Turkey.

Top and middle: Tugba Altun at Wiltshire Turkish Community Centre in Swindon with some of the donated supplies for earthquake victims.

Bottom: Richard Culverhouse and volunteers with donations in Studley Green, Trowbridge.

TREVOR PORTER

centre in Beatrice Street. “There has been such a great response, I can’t describe it,” says the freelance accountant. “The clothes came from not just our community but everyone, all over the area.”

Among the donors were members of Swindon’s newest community, the Ukrainians. One army veteran came in with a coat and sleeping bag from an Antarctic expedition with Prince Harry. “He said he wanted to give it because it would keep someone warm,” says Tugba.

Four vanloads of supplies and a further truckload have already left for Turkey via air cargo, with more still to be sent. So great was the response the centre asked people to stop bringing things, but still they come.

Nappies, blankets and clothing spills out of boxes, while in the corner there are tents, generators and even tools waiting to be sorted and packed.

“We have often raised money for other disasters around the world but we never thought we would be doing this for Turkey,” says Tugba. “It all feels so bizarre at the moment, we have had earthquakes before but nothing that has destroyed so much like this.”

Collections have taken place all round the county, one in Trowbridge had to turn people away after a deluge of donations. Richard Culverhouse, president of the Studley Green Community Centre and joint president of Trowbridge Lions Club, says: “It was just constant and we could not keep up with it. We ran out of boxes in which to put the stuff and were running around town to everywhere we could think of to get more.

“There was so much, we have had to hire two more vans to take the donations to Bristol.”

Sila Iscan, who runs a tourism business in Trowbridge, was one of around 30 volunteers who helped to collect and sort the items for onward despatch. She says: “I really don’t know how much we collected but we had to stop at 4pm because we didn’t have any more space. People have been so generous.

“We had a lot of items, including sleeping bags and baby stuff, some of which was brand new and still in the packaging. It really makes me happy to see how much people have given.”

While some volunteers are packing boxes others are making sure they get to the people who need them in the heart of the disaster zone. A team of 26 staff and volunteers from RE-ACT in Chilmark, near Salisbury, have been in Turkey since February 8.

Chief executive Toby Wicks said the charity’s role is to provide a vital link in the relief efforts by travelling to the worst affected spots to assess needs and co-ordinate supplies. Operations manager Paul Taylor and volunteer responder Jan Campbell-Wood went on a reconnaissance mission and were quickly followed by four teams of four responders. Two more teams have joined them since.

Toby says part of the charity's role has been to help sift the mountains of relief that has arrived and is being stored in a football stadium in Hayat.

He says: "Often with these emergencies there is a sort of spontaneous outpouring of assistance. Either people arrive and say, 'how can I help?' or they provide a lot of supplies and so we've had one team that has been managing what is basically a stadium full of donated goods.

"A lot of effort is needed to sort through this stuff and identify what's really required."

The other teams have travelled into flattened towns and cities as well as to isolated villages to feed back what is needed to keep the traumatised population safe and warm. "Now that the search and rescue phase is over it's now all about response and recovery and making damn sure that there's not a second crisis with loss of life due to exposure," says Toby. "It is still pretty cold at night and water, sanitation and food are an issue – as is shelter."

RE:ACT's volunteers are 60 per cent former servicemen and women and 20 per cent ambulance, police and fire personnel. "It's about bringing order to chaos and applying military protocols and clear thinking to the situation," says Toby.

"Our teams have everything they need to sustain themselves for two weeks independently – dry food rations, tents. The mission is going to the hardest to reach and most vulnerable places and because these teams are small and agile they can go further than others."

Aside from freezing temperatures, poor communications and a generally confused picture of where people are and what they need to stay safe, the teams face rubble-strewn roads and insecure buildings as they attempt to make sure survivors have shelter, food and warmth.

"The terrain is really hard, the roads are passable, but it takes quite a long time, compounded by people leaving the area," says Toby. "Many of the buildings are unsafe and the aftershocks have brought more down but we try to make sure that the response teams are as diverse as possible, so we have several firefighters who understand exactly how to assess structures."

The aftershocks are a persistent threat. "I was talking to the team when a 6.3 magnitude aftershock hit and they were thrown on the floor. It's quite something to experience that and frightening," says Toby.

The charity, founded in 2015, is based in a former RAF ammunitions base in Chilmark and has 25 staff and 2,500 UK-wide volunteers. Toby expects its teams to be in Turkey until April but with the situation shifting all the time it is impossible to say. "The survivors are incredibly nervous about returning so what might have been temporary shelters and services might persist because of that," he says.

"Once the health impacts of the disaster have been treated, and the health facilities have been hit very hard, shelter, food and water will continue to be the priorities for a while, and because of the scale of the destruction, rebuilding is going to take some time."

Although his teams are trained to be resilient and self-sufficient, the scale of the disaster and the trauma they see every day in the displaced families, orphaned children and bereaved husbands, wives, and parents, is bound to take a toll.

"It's tough for them and they are working in terrible conditions," says Toby. "But it's such a privilege to make a difference and that's what motivates the teams and what is compelling about disaster response. Morale is good, fuelled by adrenaline and – because the needs are so great – whatever you do can only make a grim situation better."

- *Donate to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Turkey-Syria Earthquake appeal at dec.org.uk and find out more about RE:ACT, and how to support its work, at re-act.org.uk.*

Below: RE:ACT volunteers on the ground in Turkey.

LEWIS INMAN, RE:ACT

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Conservation counts

Recording and counting wildlife is crucial to conservation. In urban and rural areas alike, getting involved in a survey can make a big difference. David Wembridge and Emily Sabin from People's Trust for Endangered Species explain how we can all help out this year.

NOTICING NATURE is good for people and wildlife alike. A study published earlier this year in the science journal People and Nature found that people taking part in a short, nature-based activity five times in the course of a week were happier and more satisfied with life. When the activity was a citizen project, they also felt they were making a difference.

Making a record of the wildlife around us doesn't require a lot of time or specialised equipment – just a spare moment and a smartphone or pen and paper, and by sharing those records with local recording schemes or wildlife organisations it has an even bigger impact, providing information about how our world is changing. We need to know what we're losing, where and how quickly, and whether efforts to save it are working.

One such organisation is People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), a charity that funds conservation work worldwide and which has been running citizen science projects, mapping habitats and recording species, for 25 years. These include surveys of traditional orchards, stag beetles, mammal road casualties, and one, its *Living with Mammals* survey, that this month marks its twenty-first year.

PTES' *Living with Mammals* collects records of wild mammals in the green spaces around where we live and work, and that's important because it's here that we most often come face to face with nature: the song and chatter of birds, the colour and scent of spring blossom. Four-fifths of people in the UK live in urban areas and the value of improving biodiversity and greenspace in these areas is increasingly recognised. Tracking the fortunes of wild mammals—from bats to otters—gives an insight into how well that wider biodiversity is doing and by building a picture of how populations are changing over time, the survey can pick out those species that most need help. To date, around 4,000 people have taken part, and its findings have informed reports such as the UK Natural Capital accounts and the *State of Britain's Hedgehogs.*

The online survey (www.ptes.org/LWM) runs throughout the year, with a focus in spring and autumn, recording weekly counts and signs of mammals. Volunteers whether in towns like Melksham and Marlborough or rural hamlets can choose a site to survey, somewhere they can easily get to and spend a little time at on a more or less weekly basis, such as their garden or allotment, a park or other public space. On the whole, mammals keep a low profile, but some, like grey squirrels and foxes, are easier to spot and recording common species like these is as important as looking out for the rarer ones.

Rabbits aren't everyone's favourite wild neighbour. They're still widespread and abundant – a common sight on Wiltshire's arable and downland, but their numbers are going down. In the countryside, the population nationally is a third of that 25 years ago, and in urban areas, a fifth fewer sites in *Living with Mammals* record rabbits now than did when the survey started in 2003. The interconnectedness of nature is such that, if rabbits disappear, then the animals that feed on them, such as stoats and buzzards, might also be lost, as well as the unique habitat that rabbits maintain by grazing chalk grassland. So keeping an eye on even the most ubiquitous of mammals is important.

> 'Reedbeds provide shelter for water voles'

One mammal that almost vanished from under our noses is the water vole. These charismatic rodents, with a round face, a blunt nose and glossy dark brown or black fur, are on the Red List of Britain's mammals. Their numbers fell over much of the last century as field sizes increased and farming became more intensive, and with the introduction of American mink their population further declined. In one decade alone, between 1989 and 1998, the remaining population crashed by almost 90 per cent. Since then, a 2018 study estimated that numbers have fallen further, perhaps by half.

Despite this, pockets of water voles remain over much of England, Scotland and Wales, including in Wiltshire along the River Kennet and River Wylye, and many of the county's rivers and streams such as the Lambrok, a stream near Trowbridge. The Lambrok runs slowly between clay banks that bloom with wildflowers in spring. Reedbeds provide plenty of shelter for water voles year-round. And, last year, a colony was moved from Salisbury to Ringwood in an attempt to re-establish the local population.

The National Water Vole Monitoring Programme started in 2015 and is run by PTES with the support of volunteers. It collects records of water voles at sites originally surveyed in the 1980s and 90s by

E MARNHAM

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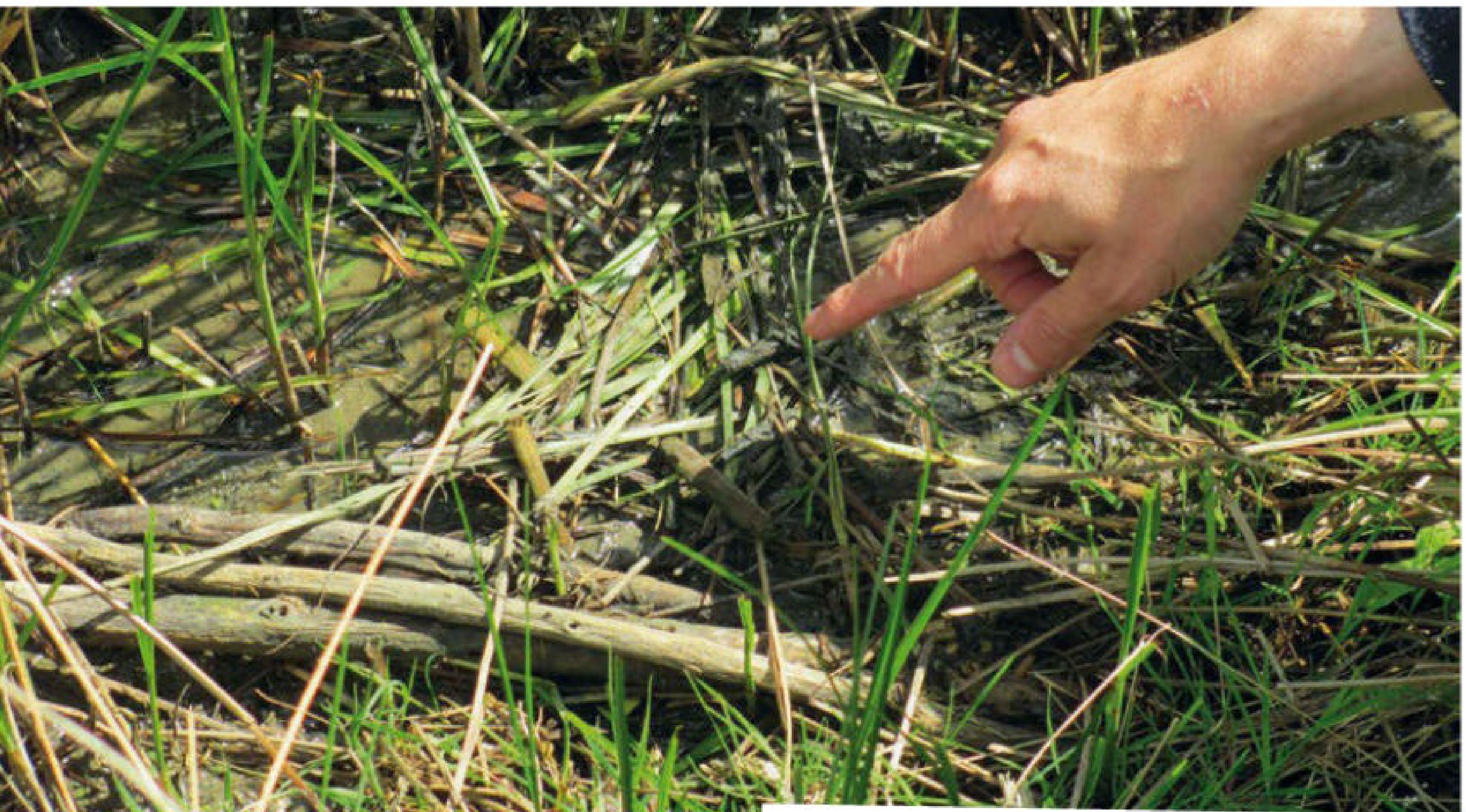
Water voles and signs of their activities can be spotted in and around the county's rivers and chalk streams.

PTES



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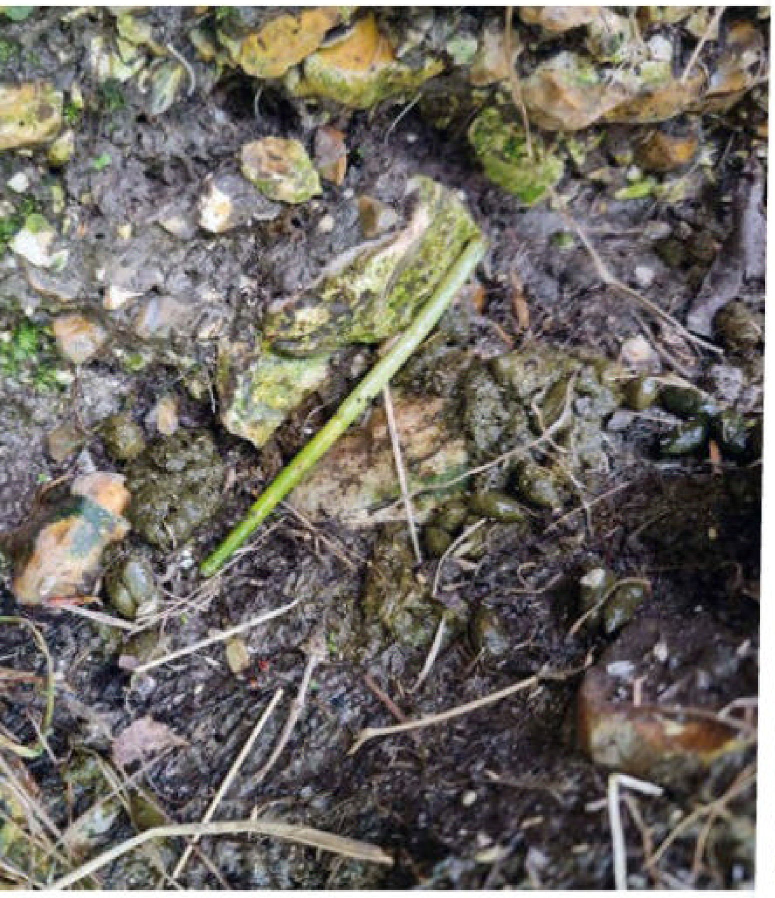

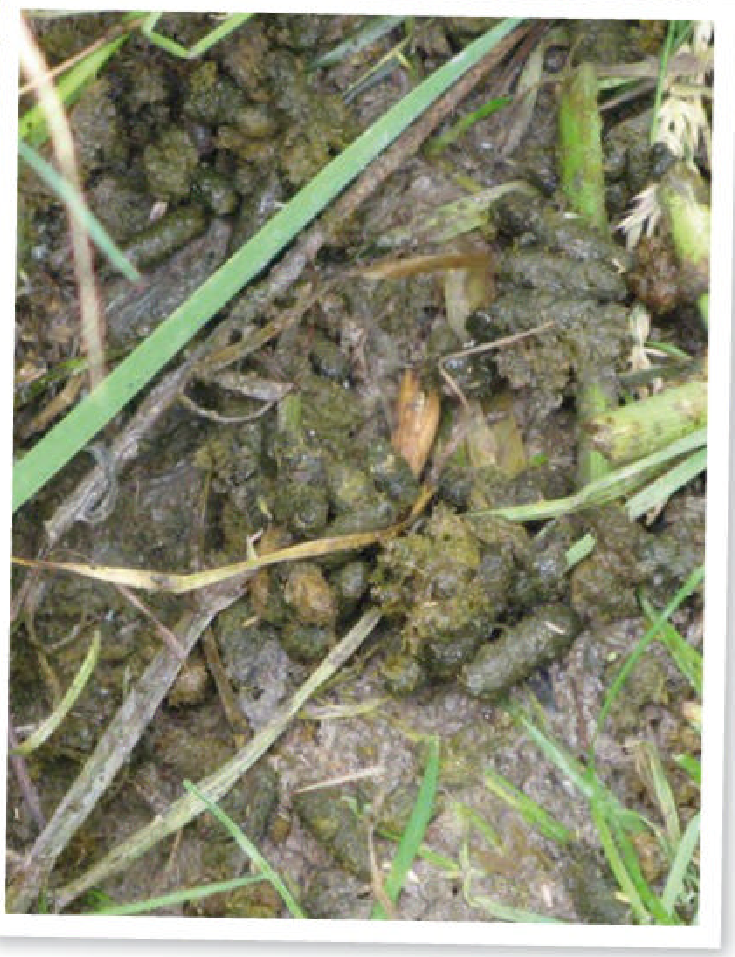

the Vincent Wildlife Trust. Volunteers are asked to walk a 500m stretch of waterway (rivers, streams, canals and ditches) between April 15 and June 15, recording sightings of water voles or the signs left behind. As well as water vole signs (and occasional sightings), signs of otters and mink can also be recorded. The breeding season is the best time to survey water voles, as the territorial females leave piles of droppings (latrines) to mark the edges of their territory. Burrows and cropped vegetation, too, are characteristic signs, although not always.

The survey, which runs annually, takes around an hour to do and the results are submitted online. Despite anecdotal evidence of water voles across the county's chalk streams, only one site was surveyed in 2022, north west of Swindon near Ashton Keynes. More volunteers are urgently needed to help gain an accurate picture of how water voles are faring in Wiltshire but also nationally. There are 400 pre-selected sites across England, Scotland and Wales that volunteers can choose from, but new sites can be registered too. So if you live on or near a chalk steam, waterway, or by the Lambrok, Avon, Bourne, Nadder, Till or Ebble, you can set up your own site. To register visit: ptes.org/campaigns/water-voles/.

The information gathered feeds into a wider programme of conservation efforts that includes mapping water vole strongholds in the UK, reintroductions, and alerting local environmental record centres to the presence of water voles.

While water voles prefer slow-moving streams, rivers and ditches, they can turn up surprisingly close to home. Urban greenspace can be a refuge from wider pressures. For water voles, these areas may have the advantage of fewer mink. A study from 2021 found records of water voles in around two-fifths of UK cities in the preceding decade, with rivers and streams within parks, sports grounds, and urban reserves, providing a home to water voles.

Wildlife surveys, like *Living with Mammals* and the NWVMP, are at the heart of conservation and couldn't be achieved without the help of thousands of volunteers. But the value of volunteering and citizen science is also in the connection it makes between people and their environment. It raises awareness and fosters a sense of ownership and agency. It offers an opportunity to learn and, ultimately, hope that the loss of the natural world can be turned round.

- *To find out more and to help your local wildlife, visit PTES' website, www.ptes.org/surveys. There's information about the different species as well as tips to help identify them and recognise field signs*

A water vole survey in progress, from latrines to feeding stations, these are all clear signs of water vole activity.

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Farmers scheme is crystal clear

A group of farmers in the Chalke Valley are working together to conserve what is described as a 'globally rare' habitat. Mary-Vere Parr finds out why the River Ebble is so important to those who farm the land it flows through.

"WHY WOULDN'T you want to do something for this?" exclaims Andrew Reis as he shows me the river running below his farmhouse at Fifield Bavant in the Chalke Valley. Shafts of spring sunshine glint on the stream's surface as it meanders through the field. Sheep graze bucolically on the far bank. Beneath the crystal-clear water, bright green reeds bend in the current.

This is the River Ebble in full winter flood. It is a winterbourne, rising around the winter solstice in December at its source just a few miles upstream at Alvediston and running for 12 miles to Bodenham, southeast of Salisbury, where it joins the River Avon.

The appearance of this stretch of water seems an annual miracle to Reis. "What I always find so amazing every year is how, when the rest of the farm is dormant in mid-winter, suddenly the river will come to life." he says. "In summer this is just dry grass but in winter, as soon as the aquifer is recharged, the river can literally metamorphose into a fully functioning ecosystem in a matter of a few days."

SIMON SMART

The River Ebble, parts of which froze in December's 2022 cold snap.

Chalk streams such as the Ebble support a multitude of species from wild trout, otters, and water voles to plants such as the water crowfoot and insects such as the winterbourne stonefly. The bird life the river attracts is remarkable. "Because the water is spring fed it's always a fairly constant temperature," Reis explains. "In a cold winter snap when the ground is rock hard, the edges of the banks remain soft. The other day, I saw a pair of snipe, three lapwings, a little egret, a heron and loads of pied wagtails."

Southern England is home to some 85 per cent of the world's spring-fed chalk streams which are so rare, so environmentally significant, and so threatened that they are sometimes called England's rainforests.

Little wonder then that the Ebble means so much to the farmers who live and work along its banks. "It means a lot to all of us who live in the Chalke valley," Reis says. "So much of our identity comes from the river. The river is what we are."

When, in 2015, Reis formed the Chalke Valley Farmer Cluster (CVFC), a group of environmentally-minded farmers, cleaning up the river was its number one priority. "It's the jewel in our crown," he says. "Chalk streams are an incredibly rare habitat, but they are under threat from extreme weather, invasive species and sediment run-off."

He has spotted worrying changes to the river's behaviour. "You used to be able to pretty much set your clock by the river's rise and fall," Reis says. "But I have noticed in the last few years that it is dry much earlier, in May rather than mid-June."

Reis tells me that for the first time this winter the river had a false start and froze in December's early cold snap. One year, a wet autumn led to it rising in October, another it never came up, on a third it never went down. "Whether you could attribute this to climate change, I don't know," he ponders.

The River Ebble at Fifield Bavant and the water pit and bund at Manor Farm.

But Reis is absolutely sure about his responsibility to do what he can to help the Ebble. "As farmers, we are in a position where we can deliver for the benefit of the whole community who live here and for the next generation," he says. "We are all aware of being custodians of the river and we are all very passionate about doing our bit."

At Manor Farm, Reis has built a water pit and bund at the top of a field running down to the river valley. Water that used to pour straight off the arable fields up the hill is now held in the pit which acts as a sediment trap. Once the pit is full, the water runs over the sides and into a bunded area made from coir rolls from where it naturally percolates into the soil.

Reis clears the pit every spring, removing 10 tonnes of sediment. "That is just one culvert under one road," he points out. Elsewhere on the farm, he has installed cross drains on farm tracks to stop them acting as a conduit into the river.

"It's really simple but it's working," Reis says. "If you scale what we have done here up to a farmer cluster you can go from making a small difference to making a very big difference." The 20 members of the CVFC cover 9,000 hectares, the whole of the Ebble catchment.

This farmer-led conservation is exactly what the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) set out to achieve when it piloted farmer clusters in 2013. It is now inviting farmers in the 1,750 square kilometre Avon catchment, which runs from south of Marlborough to Christchurch in Dorset, to join an umbrella Environmental Farmers Group (EFG) with the shared aim of improving water quality while boosting biodiversity and cutting carbon emissions.

Since its launch in May 2022, 90 farmers managing 60,000 hectares have joined the EFG. Their involvement is critical because, as Reis acknowledges: "Of all the challenges that the river faces, diffuse pollution from agriculture is probably the biggest one".

Farming is blamed for 40% of water quality failures. Teresa Dent, GWCT chief executive, believes farmers are "stepping up" to the 2021 Environment Act target of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from agriculture by at least 40 per cent by 2037. But she adds that they need to be fairly rewarded for doing so.

"In the Avon catchment, we have six or seven farm clusters doing really good things for conservation," Dent says. "But how are we going to help them keep going with their environmental work when £37 million is to leave the catchment when the basic payment scheme [the current farm support system] stops in 2027?" she asks.

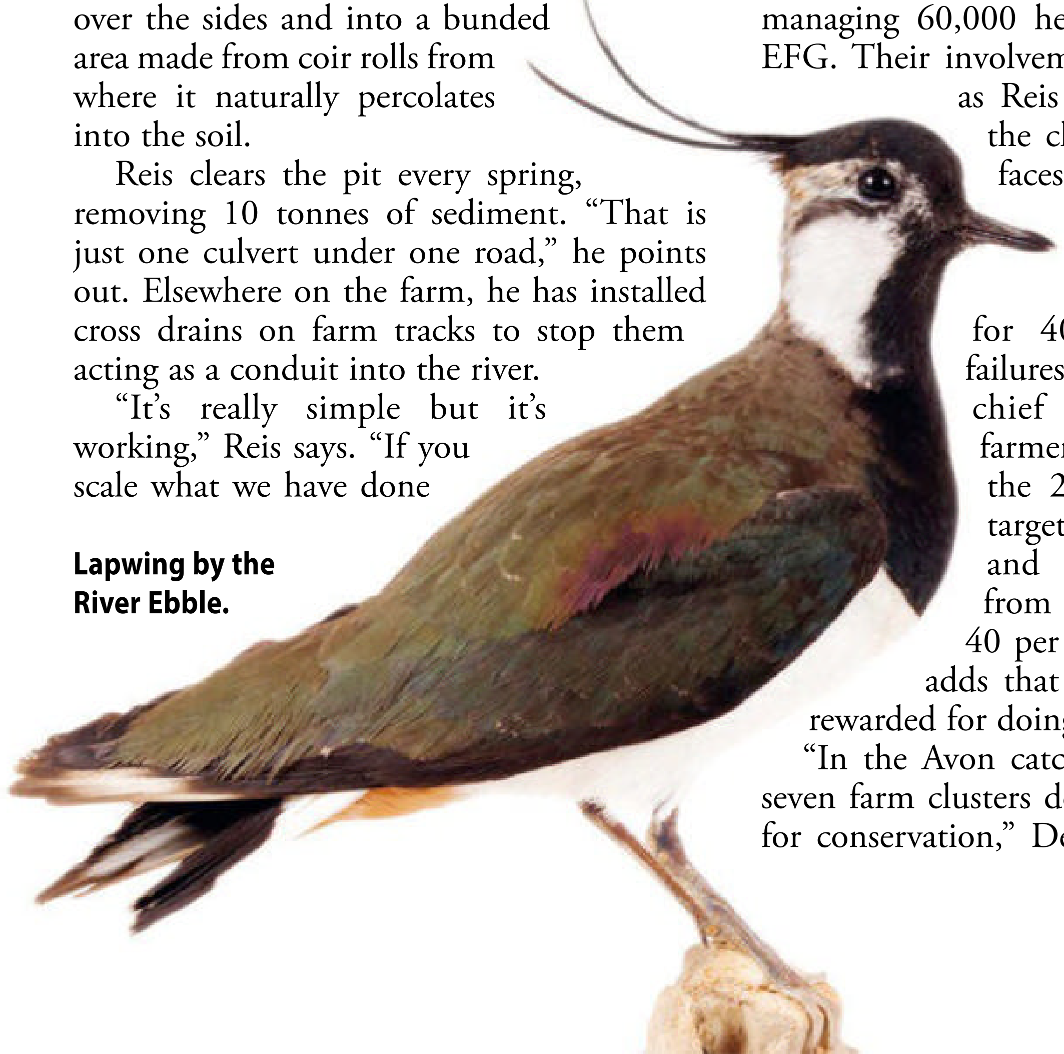
There are payments promised both by the government and the private sector for delivering environmental goods and services. "But what is also clear," Dent says, "Is that it is very difficult for individual farmers to access these sources of income."

So the GWCT has set up a natural capital trading co-operative which helps farmers tap into the world of environmental schemes and trades with developers, water companies and others seeking biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality and carbon offsetting.

All these may sound like buzz words, environmental trades are "in their infancy" and government schemes unclear. But the environmental outcomes being delivered by farmer clusters are real and measurable, Dent insists. Working with a range of partners including the Wessex Rivers Trust, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as well as GWCT scientists gives the CVFC the baseline scientific data with which to track improvements and establish a blueprint other farmers can follow.

"We aim to have a workable model to roll out to all the tributaries of the Avon," Reis says. "Half the battle is getting people to understand that you are not just doing this because you can make some money out of it. We are doing what we want to do because it's important."

- *Watch* Farmer-led conservation of the River Ebble *here www.gwct.org.uk/riverebblefilm*

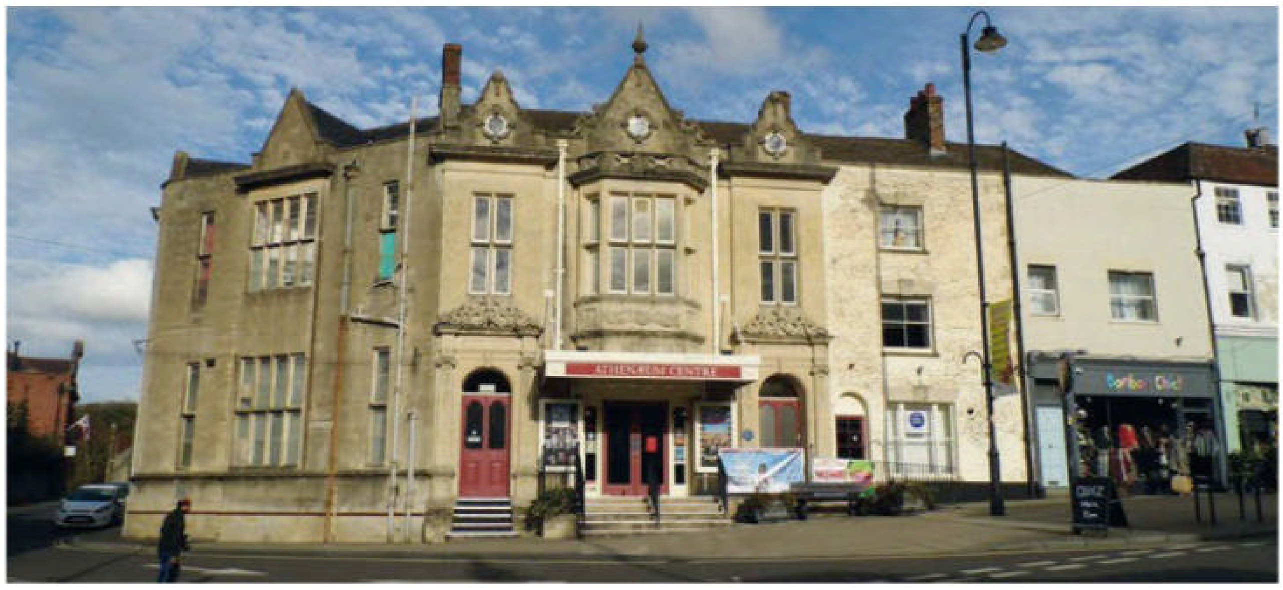


Lapwing by the River Ebble.

Treading the county boards

Wiltshire is home to a wide range of theatres and arts venues, some of which have been providing entertainment for centuries. Stephen Roberts takes a look behind the scenes at both old and new.

NOW, I love an evening at the theatre. Of course, we were denied this during the pandemic and there was real concern as to how many theatres would ride the storm and continue. Now, once again, playing before packed audiences, here's my shout-out for our provincial Wiltshire theatres that kept calm and carried on. I'm featuring 10 but this is my tribute to you all. WL



1. The Athenaeum Centre, Warminster

Built in Jacobean style, but in 1857-58 to the designs of William Stent, the Athenaeum is Grade II Listed and adorned with a blue plaque that summarises some of its history. It's Wiltshire's oldest working theatre so seems a perfect place to start. The Victorian auditorium has staged shows, concerts and plays for more than 140 years and continues to be used for drama, dance, school and charity, shows, cinema, events, and professional touring companies. The building also hosts a diverse collection of groups, activities and classes within its many rooms. There's a bar on the first floor.

- *www.theath.org.uk*

2. Manor Farm Elizabethan Playhouse, Corsley

There was a priory, dissolved by Henry VIII, with the subsequent house being built by Sir John Thynne from 1563 with Sir Walter Raleigh a regular visitor. Today's playhouse, in the manor's old Wayne House, is modelled on the Elizabethan/Jacobean theatres of yore and has seating for 130. Shakespeare wrote that 'All the world's a stage' (*As You Like It*) and Manor Farm has two stages for there's also the immensely popular Elizabethan open air theatre in the grounds which accommodates 500 and celebrates 20 years this year having first been staged in 2003. The play is set on a terraced lawn against a stunning backdrop. The Elizabethans would surely have approved.

- *www.theelizabethanplayhouse.com*

3. Neeld Community and Arts Centre, Chippenham

The Neeld's front-of-house area is the 19th century town hall, designed by James Thomson and built in 1835 on the site of the old Cannon Inn courtesy of great Chippenham benefactor and MP, Joseph Neeld, hence the name of the centre. The Neeld Hall was added in 1850, also by Thomson. Today's professional and amateur productions include panto, music, dance, comedy, film, talks, workshops, magic, musicals and theatre with community events including dance/disco. The versatile space can either accommodate 400 standing or around 200 seated and is also available for hire. A recent refurbishment has seen the addition of a brand new bar area.

- *www.neeld.co.uk*

4. The Pound Arts Centre, Corsham

There is an all-year programme of events at the Pound Arts Centre, including performances, workshops, youth theatre, film and exhibitions. Pound Arts, a registered charity, runs not only the Arts Centre but also two annual festivals, the Blue Sky Festival and 'Magic and Mayhem', and the Rural Arts touring programme which takes professional performances and participatory arts events around the county. There's a 100-seat auditorium, exhibition space, rehearsal/workshop space, studios, community workshop and café/bar. There's really something for everyone – comedy, dance, stuff for the family, music, poetry, talks, theatre and film.

- *www.poundarts.org.uk*

5. Salisbury Playhouse

Built in 1976 and with a 500-plus seat Main House and the smaller, around 150 seat Salberg, the Playhouse also has a rehearsal room, community and education space. Its regular fare includes contemporary plays, it is a producing theatre, children's theatre, musicals, comedy and the ever-popular pantomime. Plus classical music, an eclectic mix of other music including jazz, variety shows, tribute acts, and all the stuff which has led to the venue being regarded among the leading reperatory theatres in the UK. There's also an extensive 'Take Part' programme. It has a restaurant and café/bar, which are open throughout the day for coffee, lunch or that pre-show dinner.

- *www.wiltshirecreative.co.uk/whats-on/main-house*

SALISBURY PLAYHOUSE

Studio Theatre

6. Salisbury Studio Theatre

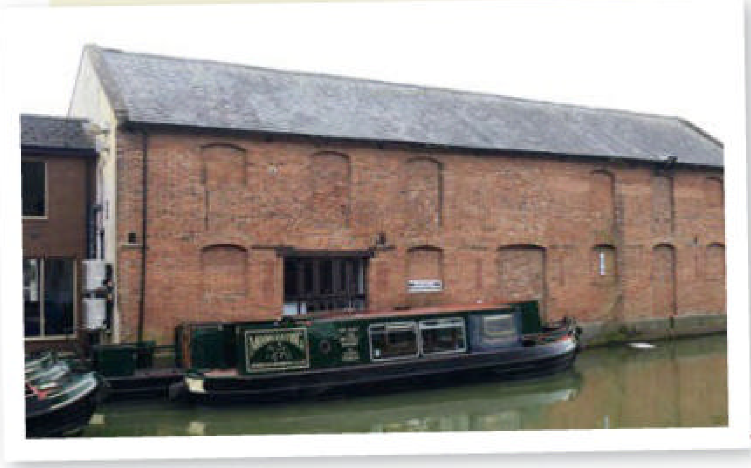
The Studio Theatre in Salisbury has had various homes in the city in its 70-plus years before settling at the 90-plus seat auditorium in Ashley Road. It's a bit of a hidden gem. Many famous names have been associated with this little theatre including the singer Rosemary Squires MBE, its current president, author and Salisbury schoolmaster William Golding (of *Lord of the Flies* fame) who directed here in 1954, and Salisbury-born actor/musician Brian Protheroe. The theatre puts on a variety of plays and musicals with outstanding stage sets no doubt aided by recent extension work which has afforded more workshop space. The theatre also has a bar.

- *www.studiotheatre.org.uk*

7. The Wharf Theatre, Devizes

This impressive waterside theatre on the banks of the Avon & Kennet canal was previously a warehouse, converting to a 97-seat theatre in 1979. The Devizes and District Amateur Dramatic Society, formed in 1947, moved in and the only dedicated theatre in east Wiltshire was up and running. The offering includes its local am-dram speciality, but also high-quality theatre, in-house musicals, plays, pantos, live music, youth shows, guest companies and speakers. This is a deceptively small theatre with a big heart, an intimate gem in its bucolic canal-side location, where the quality of production and acting can also blow you away.

- *www.wharftheatre.co.uk*



WILTSHIRE
Live MUSIC
CENTRE

8. Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford on Avon

A purpose-built 300-seat concert hall in Bradford on Avon, the Wiltshire Music Centre has been praised for the best acoustics outside London and that matters with around 150 concerts a year. Opened in 1998 with funding from one of the first National Lottery grants for art projects, its official unveiling came in the April courtesy of the Princess Royal. It showcases both professional concerts and local amateur groups as well as local youngsters' participation events. There is live music to suit all tastes (e.g. classical, jazz, folk and contemporary), stuff for the family, plus livestream, screenings and workshops. Pre-performance platters can be ordered and there's also a bar.

- *www.wiltshiremusic.org.uk*

SWINDON
WYVERN THEATRE

9. Woolstore Theatre, Codford

I understand this is the UK's only village to have its own dedicated theatre so has to be another shoe-in among my featured 10. Operating since 1928, the theatre was created by Col. Ralph Sneyd for his good lady who happened to enjoy a bit of acting. Now, that's love for you. The name 'Woolstore' comes from a previous persona as, you guessed it, an old wool store, which later masqueraded as both cinema and village hall. The resident amateur company stages highly professional productions including plays, opera and panto, utilising an auditorium seating over 100. Interval refreshments are available in the foyer. The theatre can also be hired for shows, talks or other functions.

- *www.thewoolstoretheatre.org.uk*

WOOL STORE
THEATRE

10. Wyvern Theatre, Swindon

A wyvern is a mythical, winged, two-legged dragon with barbed tail and was once the emblem of the kings of Wessex. Swindon's Wyvern Theatre on the other hand, an auditorium with 600-plus seats, dates to 1971, the official opening on September 7 of that year being by HM Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. It seems entirely apposite now, or prescient maybe, that the very first performance was courtesy of a Ukrainian dance company. The theatre's programme includes live music, tribute acts, theatre, musical theatre, dance, comedy, talks and one-person shows. A 2007 refurbishment included new bars and cafés.

- *www.swindontheatres.co.uk*

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A pacifist haven

Ham Spray House, on the eastern border of Wiltshire where it meets Berkshire, is well known as one of the hubs of Bloomsbury creativity in the early 20th century. Kitty Cole looks at how during World War II it also became a haven for conscientious objectors.

THE WRITER Lytton Strachey, artist Dora Carrington and her husband Ralph Partridge moved to Ham Spray House in 1924, an example of Bloomsbury's tendency towards 'loving in triangles' (as the subtitle of a group biography pithily puts it). But what became of this haven of bohemian arts and letters after the death of Lytton Strachey and Dora Carrington in 1932?

In fact, the house was bought in Ralph Partridge's name, and in 1926 he had met and fallen in love with Frances Marshall. They married in 1933 and had a son together in 1935. Their ties to the Bloomsbury set remained strong; Ralph had worked for Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press and Frances spent many years indexing James and Alix Strachey's translation of the works of Freud - as well as writing her extraordinarily evocative diaries which were later published.

On the eve of the Second World War both Ralph and Frances were convinced pacifists. Ralph had served with distinction in the First World War - he attained the rank of major aged 23 and received a Military Cross, but like many of his contemporaries was thoroughly disillusioned by his experiences which had proved war to be far from glorious.

Frances developed her pacifist beliefs as a schoolgirl during those years. In 1921 her sister Rachel (known as Ray) had married David 'Bunny' Garnett who had spent the First World War as a conscientious objector, working on farms in Suffolk and then near Charleston in Sussex, together with Duncan Grant. But as Frances began her war diaries, published as *A Pacifist's War* in 1978, her sister was dying of cancer. Unbeknownst to her, Bunny was already involved with Angelica Bell, who would shortly become his second wife. Bunny and his two sons are among the first visitors to Ham Spray House in 1940.

Ham Spray House was home to members of the Bloomsbury set from the 1920s.

James and Alix Strachey come to stay in the spring of 1940, talking of psychoanalysis and declaring 'that Chamberlain could not be wicked because he had a passion for Beethoven's last quartets'. Also present was Anthony West, son of the writers Rebecca West and HG Wells; at only 26 he was in greater danger of being called up and Frances recalls his decision, as a conscientious objector, to take a non-combatant role by enlisting on a minesweeper. Critic and literary editor Raymond Mortimer and Clive Bell are present when news comes through of the fall of Paris. The sense of combined panic and depression at this point in the war, when defeat seemed inevitable to many, comes through powerfully in the diaries. Frances makes clear that she was not alone in trying to procure a suicide pill, while various friends suggest that she sends her son to America as soon as possible (she doesn't).

> 'Clearly emotions were running high at this point in the war'

Other friends make or receive regular visits - among them the critic Desmond MacCarthy and his wife Molly, the biographer David Cecil, and Ralph's old friend the writer Gerald Brenan whom he first met in an officer's mess early in 1915. Gerald had lived in Spain from 1919 until 1936 when it became too dangerous to stay any longer; when he reached England, he and his wife Gamel Woolsey relied on Frances and Ralph's hospitality at Ham Spray, before settling at Bell Court in Aldbourne in 1938. Gerald was fiercely critical of pacifism, considering it as good as being on the side of the Fascists, yet he continued to visit Ham Spray regardless. Until, that is, in 1941 - as Hitler invaded Russia - he wrote Ralph a particularly aggressive letter, condemning him as one of the 'pacifist isolationists' who 'by their folly and short-sightedness have helped to produce this war.' After that they did not meet again until after the war was over.

Marjorie Strachey comes to stay for a weekend and, despite both Lytton and James Strachey having been COs in the last war, she suddenly declares that 'all conscientious objectors ought to be dropped by parachute in Germany since they wish to be ruled by the Nazis.' Clearly emotions were running high at this point in the war, but Frances felt justifiably indignant that so many who disapproved of their pacifism still came to take advantage of their hospitality. She herself stuck to her 'absolute conviction that progress can never be achieved by force or violence, only by reason and persuasion.'

At the beginning of December 1941 men aged 40-51 were required to register for military service, forcing Ralph to testify formally as a conscientious objector. Julia Strachey's partner, the artist Lawrence Gowing, had already registered as such, but like many others decided that he would accept civil defence work if required. They receive news of the philosopher Bertrand Russell who, formally a pacifist had recanted on having reached the safety of the USA (Ralph's comment: 'Bad Form'). Frances too was now summoned to register for National Service, but with a seven-year-old child was never given a job.

She had enough to do at home. Like many other households, Ham Spray House was left without any domestic help as young girls preferred the comradeship and patriotism of working in factories. So for the first time Frances had to take on all the cooking and cleaning. They were almost self-sufficient, growing fruit and vegetables, producing their own honey and slaughtering their two pigs. When Ralph's application to be registered as a CO was finally accepted on appeal, he stated that he 'felt he was more use to the community producing and distributing food in the remote part of Wiltshire where he lived'. This is what he did.

A young friend stationed in Cairo reported that Ham Spray was considered 'the only civilised house in England.' It was also well-informed, thanks to a network of friends in high places. Saxon Sydney-Turner and JM Keynes - those economists at the heart of the Bloomsbury set - were working for the Treasury and the Bank of England (and as government financial and monetary advisor) respectively. Bunny Garnett was working for the air ministry, while Roy Harrod was on the Economic Advisory Committee - part of Churchill's S-branch - which, Frances writes gloomily, 'controls our food and fates.'

In March 1943 a 'Major in the Guards' turned up at Ham Spray to ask if there was anywhere his men could stay for a night or two while on manoeuvres. Ralph and Frances offered them the nursery to sleep in and the music room as an office. The men turned up and took possession of the rooms in the dead of night, then, after two days of tapping typewriters and despatch riders, they left again as swiftly as they had appeared. Frances grew almost fond of them but nevertheless thought 'their activities seem as mad and meaningless as those of ants in an anthill.'

> 'But we don't know how to get used to freedom'

Ralph's formal recognition as a conscientious objector in 1943 made their pacifism much more widely known, and Frances found herself aware of local disapproval. One 'Queen among the gentry' declared to a friend "I'm going to have nothing more to do with them myself... I'm going to boycott them absolutely."

But even those friends who did support the war found themselves caught up in the paranoia and xenophobia that it had bred. Gerald, a member of the Home Guard, was caught using a flashlight at night and accused of signalling to the enemy. Raymond Mortimer and Eardley Knollys, who was working for the National Trust, recounted how, while photographing a building in Bristol for the Trust, they were reported to the police by a woman describing them as "an obvious Italian with a blond German-looking man".

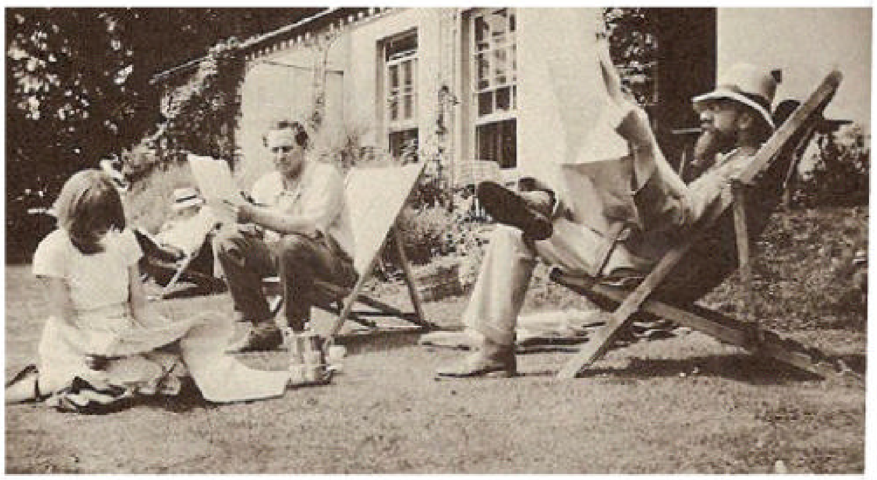
Frances' diary speeds up during the final years of the war as she finds herself busier than ever domestically and with less time to devote to writing - but this pace also lends momentum to the events. From March 1944 they are expecting the launch of the 'Second Front' at any minute; when it is finally announced in early June Frances writes: '[this] is what we have expected and waited for with such a horrible mixture of dread and longing, for months.' The initial anxiety and hope with which they listened to news of progress in France was overtaken in the following few days by a danger closer to home - the pilotless flying bombs known as 'doodlebugs'.

Frances is struck by the differing reactions of everyone she speaks to, from horror to humour, and even flippancy - "and then I looked up and there was another chap coming along..." One consequence was a fresh influx of evacuees from London, with whom the Partridges discussed what should be done with the Germans after the war and what peace would be like. At the end of 1944 Frances quotes one of her guests, the Russian artist Boris Anrep: "so low is our moral disintegration in this sixth year of the war that I hardly can get up from my bed in the morning... Somehow I float in idle contemplation of the world, waiting, waiting..."

In April, as blackout restrictions are lifted, 'the pressure has let off, the prison bars are being raised, but we don't know how to get used to freedom'.

Hitler's death is reported on the wireless on May 1, 1945, then 'waiting, waiting for the end' - which, when it comes, is a damp squib: a neighbour calls to say "it's just come through - tomorrow will be V-day. Churchill will announce the end of the war in Europe at 3pm. It's all very flat... we've just been drinking a little weak gin." But at least the announcement did bring a sense of peace, a relief from the relentless tension. And on that strangely quiet but momentous evening, Frances 'thought of the night nearly six years ago when the war began and how I had looked up at the stars, wondering what was in store for us all, and gazed on by those same impersonal eyes.' WL

Below: Teatime on a summer day at Ham Spray House, Dora Carrington, her husband Ralph Partridge, and Lytton Strachey. Saxon Sydney-Turner in background.



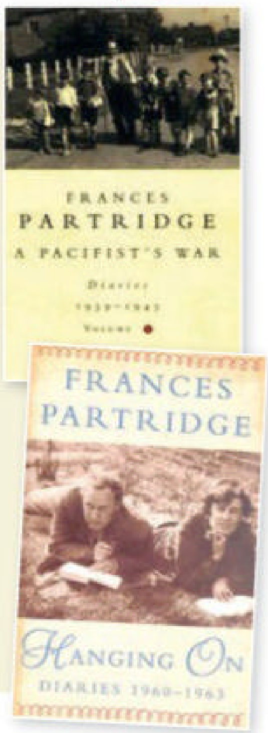
HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG

Right: Dora Carrington, Ralph Partridge, Lytton Strachey, Oliver Strachey and Francis Partridge.

The Diaries

Francis Partridge lived at Ham Spray House until 1960, whilst there, she kept a diary. *A Pacifists War* and *Hanging On* present an intimate and vivid picture of life at Ham Spray embracing general aspects of activity such as music, reading and conversation, as well as evocative descriptions of nature.

- *www. orionbooks.co.uk*



Lucinda turns to a natural approach

From her workshop in Trowbridge, Lucinda Goulden creates make-up brushes and homewares out of wood and natural fibres. Mary-Vere Parr went along to meet her and discovers how a recent BBC show has transformed her business.

Left: Lucinda Goulden in her workshop

"I WISH I had more to show you, but I just keep selling out," apologises woodturner Lucinda Goulden as she hands me the one makeup brush that she can find in her home in Trowbridge.

Ever since appearing on the BBC TV show *Make It at Market*, aired earlier this year, in which *The Repair Shop*'s Dom Chinea and a team of business and craft experts help budding entrepreneurs make a living from their crafting hobby, Lucinda has been working round the clock to keep up with demand for her handcrafted, natural brushes. "It's insane," she smiles. "Each time I do a collection, it sells out."

When she applied for the show last year, little did Lucinda think that she would win a place on it or that she could turn her hobby into a business. "I've never won anything, never got anything in life," she says bashfully.

Lucinda took up woodwork only five years ago while living in Bristol. She began by whittling spoons from pieces of timber picked up on woodland walks and graduated to a course in cabinet making. Then one day she saw some woodturning videos online, signed herself up for a class and quickly realised that this was what she wanted to do.

"I enjoyed cabinet making but it was a bit too structured," she says. By contrast, wood turning offered the creativity she craved. Lucinda was brought up in the care system and suffers from anxiety. "I find sculpting wood so therapeutic," she says. "It's such a nice feeling – like scissors gliding through wrapping paper."

She got her own workshop - a couple of electric lathes and a selection of chisels, gouges, scrapers and skews - and started experimenting. "I'd make a piece every week," she recalls. "I'd get wood from everywhere – locally or half-way across the world. I just had to find out about woods and each new one was for me the most amazing."

She started sharing photos of her work on social media and sold the occasional piece but regarded it as no more than a hobby. So, when she answered an ad inviting woodturners to apply for a TV show she dreamt only of earning enough money to allow her to continue buying woods. "I was so surprised when the BBC was interested in what I did," she recalls. "I didn't have much confidence and was worried I wouldn't sell anything."

But, under the mentorship of Sussex-based wood artists Barnaby Ash and Dru Plumb (ashandplumb.co.uk), Lucinda not only sold successfully at her first ever craft show but also mastered a host of skills to launch her own business in eight weeks.

> 'I was suprised when the BBC was interested'

"I'm wearing so many hats I think that sometimes people forget that there's still a human behind business, that it's still just me," she laughs.

First off, she bought a camera and set up a photographic studio in a corner of her spare bedroom. Then she spent hours on YouTube learning how to create a website. "I'm not good with technology and I didn't even own a laptop," she says. "I had to learn how to do it step by step." She also took Ash and Plumb's advice on pricing to target her wares at the high-end market. Nail brushes start at £50, makeup brushes range from £95 to £120 and vases, dishes, bowls and platters are priced from £80.

Ash and Plumb also gave her the confidence to streamline her range, focusing chiefly on the makeup brushes they so admired. "I'm so grateful for the show because I think (without it) I would still be doing too many different things," she says.

The ideas from the brushes came from her own makeup bag. "I realised the one brush that I loved was made from natural fibres," she says. "Lots of brushes come and go but I'd kept this one because it felt nice and reminded me of getting ready for the first few dates with my partner.

"The point of the brushes I make is the ritual of self-care," Lucinda adds. It's about the person who uses it and the memories associated with them. I get a lot of inspiration from vintage makeup. A beautiful engraved lipstick box is all about the person who used it. What stories could it tell?"

The make-up brushes are all hand-crafted and made from wood and natural fibres making each piece unique.

Alongside the brushes, Lucinda Goulden also makes other decorative household items with all the wood being sustainably sourced.

As a onetime vegan, she thought long and hard about using natural fibres, in this case locally-sourced goat's hair, for her brushes. Today, most makeup brushes are made with synthetic fibres, but Lucinda wanted to be plastic-free and loved the luxurious feel and quality of goat hair. Natural fibres hold their shape well and, as the hairs are porous, powder penetrates the brush.

Lucinda makes each piece to last as a treasured heirloom. Washing, sterilising and combing the goat's hair alone takes three days. Each brush takes around six hours to make with Lucinda hand-tying and knotting the fibres into the base and adding a recycled silver or gold disc bearing her initials, the hallmark and the date. "I do everything in my power to make a piece collectible in the hope that someone could have it in 200 years' time," she says. "The precious materials and craftsmanship will mean it grows in value."

Lucinda has had to figure out almost every step in the process for herself, often resorting to online videos to learn almost extinct skills. "There's been a lot of trial and error," she admits. But it is evident that, masked up at her lathe, she is in her element. "It's a labour of love," she says. "I'm a bit of a perfectionist."

Attention to detail extends to her packaging. "I focus heavily on the gifting aspect," she says. "I'm the kind of person who saves the ribbon from Christmas wrapping. Every little detail and the fact that the packaging is reusable is important."

Each brush sits on a cushion of silk fibres in a cardboard box, wrapped in a linen bag tied with a silk drawstring. "I think that is the power of a small business – you can't compete with a massive make up brand but you can create this really personal thing."

The combination of heritage, craftsmanship and a modern, minimalist design is a winning one. Lucinda's patented designs sit as well in the hand as on a dressing table and are bought as gifts for grandchildren, for 21st birthdays, or for anniversaries.

But ultimately everything turns on Lucinda's love of wood, specifically brightly coloured wood. She sources sustainable small batches from around the world. "With some woods the colour comes up when you work them," she explains. "With others they are just naturally bright pink or purple." Her favourite is Zericote, an ethereal, tropical hardwood which looks like "beautiful paintings". Another is Pink Ivory, an elusive, South African heartwood. Purple Heart, a weighty and durable South American hardwood, is one of the most popular. She has chosen its deep purple as her brand colour. She also uses native woods such as ash and sycamore.

Since the TV show, Lucinda has found a seamstress to outsource the making of the bags to free up time to make more brushes. Speeding up production to meet demand has been "a big learning curve" for her. But she is determined to keep her business small and personal, turning away the brush manufacturers who approached her. "I'm not guided by money," she says. "I really want them to be handcrafted items, not mass produced."

As a mother of two girls aged three and four, she also has very clear priorities. "Being a mum is the main thing in my life," she says. "All I really wanted was to have a part-time business to support my family." Much of her work is made late at night after the girls are in bed. "Perhaps when they go to school I'll have a bit more time," she ventures.

Being a mother has made her cautious about investing to build her business. "I don't feel I can risk as much as other people," she says. But her collection of lathes is slowly growing in the workshop at the bottom of the garden that she shares with her partner ("he'd much rather have it for his bikes," she laughs). This summer, Lucinda plans to oust the bikes so she can fit in another lathe and offer wood turning courses.

"I would love to get more people excited about woodturning," she says. She has 11k Instagram followers, is the first company to come up on a Google "natural makeup brushes" search and has a growing band of email subscribers, but nothing beats face-to-face contact with customers. "It's just so nice to know my work is appreciated," she says. WL

- *See www.lucindagoulden.co.uk.*

For more information

Meet Lucinda Goulden at Handmade Oxford, June 16-18, 10am-4pm, Waterperry Gardens, Oxfordshire OX33 1JZ, tel 01844 339254, early bird tickets from £15
- handmadeinbritain.co.uk

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James’ driving ambition

James Verdin was diagnosed with severe autism aged three but the discovery that he excels at golf has opened up a whole world of possibilities. Gary Lawrence met him and his parents at High Post Golf Club near Salisbury.

PING
100 Years

A GREAT DEAL of conversation in the Verdin household centres around 19-year-old son James' handicap but if you thought it's in relation to his autism you'd be as wide of the mark as an erratic putt.

This subject of much debate at the family home in Broad Chalke is all to do with the promising young golfer's rapid progress in a sport that, in the words of his father, has turned his life around.

James' autism was diagnosed at the age of three after mother Emma and father Stuart, a consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology at Salisbury District Hospital, became concerned about his speech and general development.

"It did mean that we knew what we were dealing with and the best ways to help," says Emma. "It wasn't nice at all but the mantra with autism and most neuro diversity is early intervention, so if you can get speech and language therapy and bring on speech it can be a big help."

His years at the John McNeill Opportunity Centre in Salisbury and Woodford Valley Primary School's now lost and lamented SEND resource unit, helped James make gains in speech and understanding but it was an outing on a family holiday in Cornwall when he was 10 that unlocked something special.

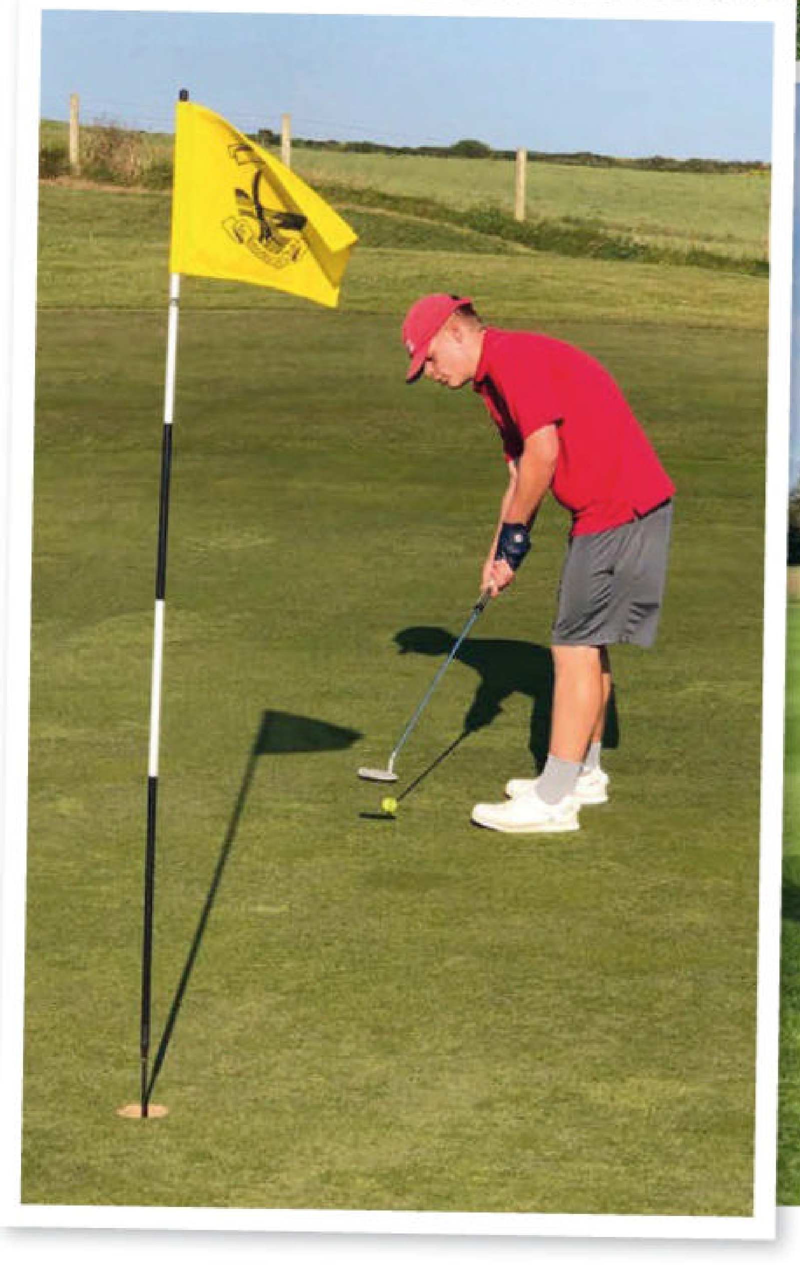
While Emma and daughter Ellie went to Newquay Zoo, Stuart took James to play pitch and putt. "James had always been quite good at hitting a cricket ball, so I knew he had an eye for the ball," recalls Stuart, himself a lapsed golfer.

"I got James to tee his ball up and he hit it, and I thought to myself 'wow, you've actually hit that okay'. During the round of nine holes he hit some good shots and bad shots but I began to think 'you can really do this'."

The pair returned to the course twice with James pleading for more, so back home in Wiltshire Stuart took him to the par three course at Salisbury Golf Centre to ask coach Ben Christie-Clover about lessons. "He said he'd take a look at him but quickly said 'we can do this no problem at all'," recalls Stuart.

Within three years the youngster was taking part in junior tournaments around the area and in 2016 he won his first knockout at Henstridge in the Blackmore Vale.

TORO
WORKMAN



Previous page: James with his parents Stuart and Emma.

This page: James learning the greenkeepers trade and on the green sealing a putt.

“It was really nice to see James have something that he enjoyed and was good at alongside other children,” says Stuart. “It was the fact he could just be part of it and for the other players to think he was good and to acknowledge it – it was amazing.

“There have never been any allowances for the autism because golf takes everything into account through the handicap system, it was just like ‘this lad can play, he’s fine’.”

Shortly after that his coach told him he’d outgrown the par three game and needed the challenge of a full-size course. “Dan Radley, who had been an assistant at the golf centre, was then a pro at High Post and I also knew a few members there so we had a look and both joined,” recalls Stuart.

“We thought it would be a very accepting club and that is how it has turned out. People have been nothing other than a massive support and now James knows more members here than I do.”

Being under the eye of a pro and the challenge of the proper course didn’t faze James. “I didn’t feel scared, I was just happy that I’d discovered a new golf course,” he says.

He showed it in his game and his confidence and ability soared as quickly as his handicap plummeted. His first official handicap in 2018 was 24 but by 2020 it had fallen to 12. This year it is 4.8.

In 2019 he won the 36 hole Wiltshire Nett Junior Open at Hamptworth, came second at Marlborough and notched up armfuls of other trophies. He had become a serious contender on the county’s junior circuit.

“I can remember going to one of the opens and when James came in from his round all the boys began asking me his score because they saw him as a potential threat,” says Emma. “That was a real moment for me because all these top young players saw him as a competitor.”

In 2020 he was made High Post’s junior captain. “It was wonderful of the club to feel it was okay to do that,” says Stuart. “When teams visited James would be speaking to the other captain and be part of the whole set-up. It was really lovely because he was captain on merit.”

James Verdin winning his first trophy.

Covid robbed James, and everyone else, of much competitive golf that year so he was captain again in 2021.

This acceptance came at a time in his life when many people with similar conditions are at a crossroads. With his education at Springfield Academy in Calne coming to an end he, like many of his peers do, faced limited paths into the world of work or further study.

> ‘All these top young players saw him as a competitor’

Once again, golf came to the rescue. “We were talking to the school about some kind of career in golf and then we approached the greenkeepers at High Post and they were more than happy to have James in to help them,” says his father. For two years he learned the greenkeeper’s trade – working three or four mornings a week raking bunkers, replacing divots, and keeping the course immaculate.

He remains a familiar, and popular, sight around the club while he continues his relentless focus on honing his game and carving out a career in golf with a training programme that sees him practising and playing at least 25 hours a week.

He has represented High Post’s men’s A team and now has his sights on men’s open championships around the county. “I need to keep playing, keep practising and keep learning – and I’ve got to get my handicap down to scratch,” he says.

Stuart adds: “James is good at this game but once you get your handicap down to four, to get any lower becomes more and more difficult. But the sense of worth he gets in terms of having something to do every day is so good for him.”

While a pro tour place may seem like a distant dream, just having the focus, motivation and enjoyment denied to so many young people like him is enough for his parents.

“Somehow getting James employment in the world of golf within the next 10 years is the aim,” says Stuart. “It’s a gradual process and we’ll see how far it takes us. I couldn’t have told you five years ago that we would be here, so to know where we’ll be in another five years is impossible.”

Emma, who is now also a member and an enthusiastic golfer, adds: “It’s a lovely world to be in and we often have this ‘what would we do without golf’ conversation. We don’t like to go down that track because we just don’t know where we would be.”

The sport, with its rules and methodical way of playing is tailor-made for someone who has been diagnosed as autistic. “It’s not a quick sport and you are outside for three or four hours, in the fresh air following a ball around a course,” says Emma.

“You are off your computer, you are focused on doing that one thing well. It’s like a mindfulness exercise and for James it is a very calming thing to be away from all of the other distractions and noises of life – out among nature playing the sport that he loves.”

Emma is keen to acknowledge the significant part played by Sandra and Mark Greenman of Wootton Rivers, near Marlborough, in James’ development. “They are foster parents who helped look after James under a shared care arrangement with us from when he was seven to the age of 16,” she said.

“They were there for all of us during some very difficult times, but they always supported James’ golf and Sandra especially enjoyed caddying for him. We are all so grateful to them.”

Sometimes she says there are moments of clarity that demonstrate just how far her son has come. “High Post were playing Cumberwell Park and coming up to the 18th green all these young lads were walking up together chatting and there was James among them. I just had this moment of him being the same as all of them she recalls.

“I was walking behind, a bit tearful, a bit happy, and I was thinking ‘I would never have imagined this’. That’s the beauty of sport.”

Even if James weren’t showing such potential as a player, the gift the game has given his son in terms of purpose and fulfilment isn’t lost on his father. “Golf has become that one thing that has turned James’ life and our lives around,” he says.

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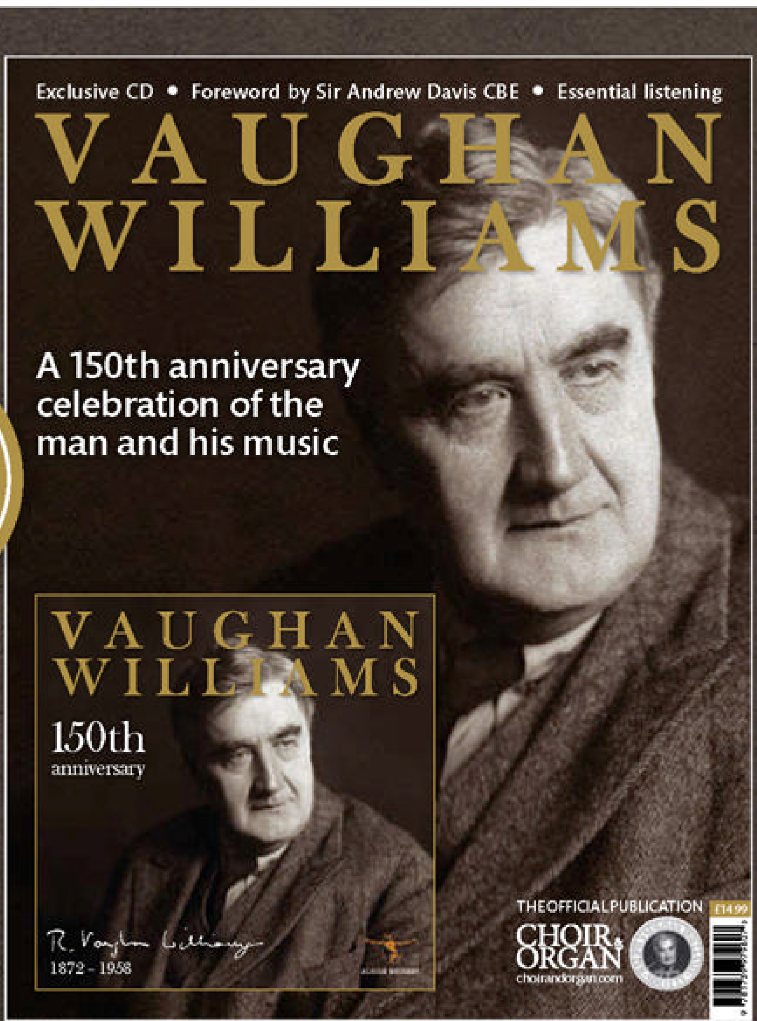
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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS SOCIETY

SCHOOL NOTICEBOARD

Service please!

On Thursday afternoons when I was at secondary school in Birmingham, I participated in an activity rather dubiously nicknamed, 'Granny Bashing'. I must immediately state that this did not involve any physical violence whatsoever, although it did involve a granny. Her name was Doris and she lived on the top floor of a rather rundown block of high-rise flats in a rather insalubrious part of Aston, not far from my bus stop home. The activity was offered to Sixth Form pupils who were keen to give some help and support to elderly people in the local area. We would visit our 'Granny' for up to an hour and sit and chat or help around the flat –my weekly meetings with Doris would also involve sherry, which as a 17-year-old was definitely part of the appeal.

If we fast forward 30 years, on joining Warminster School as headmaster I was pleased to learn that we ran an annual 'Community Action Day'. On this day in June, we would go forth from the school gates and do good deeds around the local community, from painting fences to clearing churchyards of weeds. However successful a day this was, I always felt we could do more and that as a school that has been an important part of the community since 1707, we should take a much more active approach in helping others. In September 2021 we therefore launched the EDGE (Explore, Discover, Grow, Engage) program which runs every Wednesday afternoon. For some of our pupils this means being part of our Combined Cadet Force and for the younger ones we have games. However, for well over 150 of our pupils in Years 11, 12, and 13 it involves a wide range of community action projects.

At the outset it was important that we went out to the community of Warminster to ascertain what was needed. Our community outreach co-ordinator, Lisa Cook, spent a lot of time engaging with various groups and individuals to see where there might be gaps and how our pupils might start to fill them. One of the early and most successful projects was the Tech Club. Working with members of Warminster U3A, our pupils offered help and support in using new mobile phones or other electronic devices. The feedback was excellent, and we could immediately see the benefits for those who came along each week. The relationship with U3A flourished and we expanded into croquet, art, and chess clubs, where our pupils and their members got together each week to enjoy the activities and each other's company.

Eighteen months on and the EDGE has grown significantly and some of the projects include:

Charity shops - We go to five shops each week with two pupils in each. Pupils sort donations, tag items and serve customers. We also volunteer at the Dorothy House Virtual shop; pupils take photos of items and upload items to selling platforms.

Wessex MS Centre - This is a centre for people who are having oxygen therapy for Multiple Sclerosis. Pupils meet & greet, make tea and help with daily tasks.

Community gardening group - A group of pupils go out each week and help in care homes, the town park, war memorial etc. We work in conjunction with the Town Council as well as private residential/care homes.

Pen Pal Club - For local residents who are housebound, we have set up a pen pal club. We have now expanded to several care homes. The club has more than 45 pen pals, all linked with pupils.

Sambourne and Princecroft primary schools - Pupils help out and plan several afterschool clubs including art, maths, dance and debating.

There can be no doubt that as well as helping our local community our own pupils have benefitted hugely from the EDGE program and have grown in confidence and learnt to develop relationships with a wide range of different people, young and old. As Headmaster, it makes me very proud that the experience I had with Doris all those years ago can now be repeated, and that our pupils can appreciate the benefits of serving others – without the sherry! One of my favourite quotations, and one I've used a lot in school assemblies, comes from the American Essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson who said:

> *'...to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden, a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.'*

Matt Williams, headmaster,
Warminster School

- *www.warminsterschool.org.uk/welcome/welcome*

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Dauntsey's dancing legends

More than 200 pupils took to the stage this term for Dauntsey's annual Lower School Dance Show. It was an entertaining and uplifting evening as pupils performed a total of 17 dances, based around the theme of 'Legends'. They showcased a number of different dance genres – classical, street dance, contemporary and more – and pupils performed with confidence, energy and enthusiasm, showcasing all they have learnt since the start of the school year.

The show was opened by the Lower School Dance Company who performed an upbeat and impressive dance to *Another one bites the Dust* there was then a playful tribute to the Royal Family and Queen Elizabeth II, the Boys' Dance Club took the audience back to the 80s with a slickly choreographed performance to *Beat It* and the Third Form Dance Company impressed with a superb display of talent and passion.

Antony Edwards, head of dance at Dauntsey's said: "The annual Dance Show requires all of our first form and second form to perform – many of the pupils in the first form may not have had any previous dance experience, so to see them up on the stage, performing in front of a large audience is incredible. All of the pupils fully embraced this opportunity, getting involved in the choreography and really thinking about how we could bring the theme of legends to life. It was a fantastic show and I am so proud of them all."

A parent who attended the show said: "Since September I have watched my son develop confidence and a love and appreciation of dance and it was incredible to see that all come together on stage. The excitement and energy from all of the pupils was just brilliant – what a lot of talent in one room!"

At Dauntsey's, pupils can take dance as a GCSE and A Level option.

• *www.dauntseys.org*

Double success for St Francis pupil

To win one scholarship is impressive, but to win two, from the same world-renowned school is simply outstanding!

Year 8 pupil at Pewsey prep school St Francis has done just that though; not content with securing a sports scholarship, he has also been awarded a music scholarship to the Princess of Wales' alma mater, Marlborough College.

Will follows in his older sisters' footsteps, both of whom already attend Marlborough, which boasts an impressive array of alumni including comedian Jack Whitehall.

In his feedback for his Sports scholarship, the sports department commented on Will's talent as a sportsman as well as team playing skills.

Will himself commented "I am just really relieved that I secured a place at Marlborough College; to win a scholarship is great but two , I couldn't believe it, I'm really happy!"

Head at St Francis, David Lee, added "Will is a complete asset to St Francis, and so we are not surprised that Marlborough College have recognised him in this way – it is thoroughly well deserved and we are over the moon for Will."

• *stfpewsey.co.uk*

Success for Will.

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ST FRANCIS
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British Physics Olympiad

Six students at Rendcomb College recently took part in the British Physics Olympiad online senior challenge. All six students did wonderfully and in total received one gold award, four silvers, and one bronze.

This fantastic group of A-Level students worked hard to complete the challenge with such success and are excited to use the experience to help bolster their knowledge in the upcoming physics A-Level exams.

Dr Bakker (head of physics) and the College's other fantastic teachers, help students achieve their academic goals and potential, with this being just one of the reasons that Rendcomb College received an 'Excellent' rating on their latest Independent Schools Inspection Report.

The British Physics Olympiad is a great example of how teachers support their pupils in becoming well-rounded, ambitious students. Additionally, the schools Oxbridge Preparation Path (OPP) and Suffolk Group are designed to give pupils opportunities to develop their skills further. The OPP and Suffolk Group aim to support and guide pupils in their journey to applying for Oxbridge colleges.

A teacher who is experienced in the chosen area of study will help each pupil prepare, conducting practise interviews and recommending reading material and lectures to help broaden their studies. They will also help pupils with their UCAS applications, instructing them on how to best promote themselves to their chosen universities.

- *rendcombcollege.org.uk*

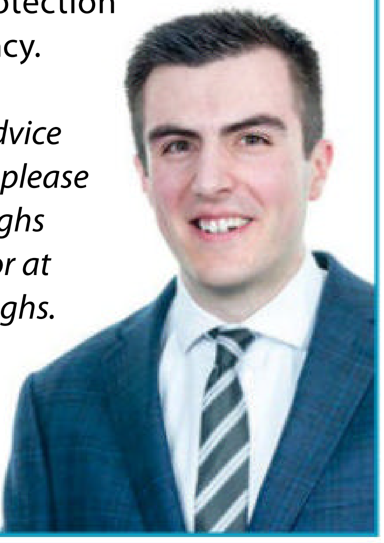
How families can help future generations

Andrew Langbridge, a solicitor in Wansbroughs' Private Client Department, looks at grandparents contributing to their grandchildren's school or university fees.

A good education comes at a cost and if you are considering contributing to your grandchildren's school or university fees, here are a few things to bear in mind:

- You can gift £3,000 in each tax year with no inheritance tax consequences. Any unused amount can be carried forward for one tax year only.
- If you have excess income, you may be able to gift it with no inheritance tax consequences. To do so, you must keep detailed records of your income and expenditure in each tax year.
- If you would like to make a more substantial contribution, you may wish to consider a trust. Trusts can provide flexibility, protection and tax efficiency.

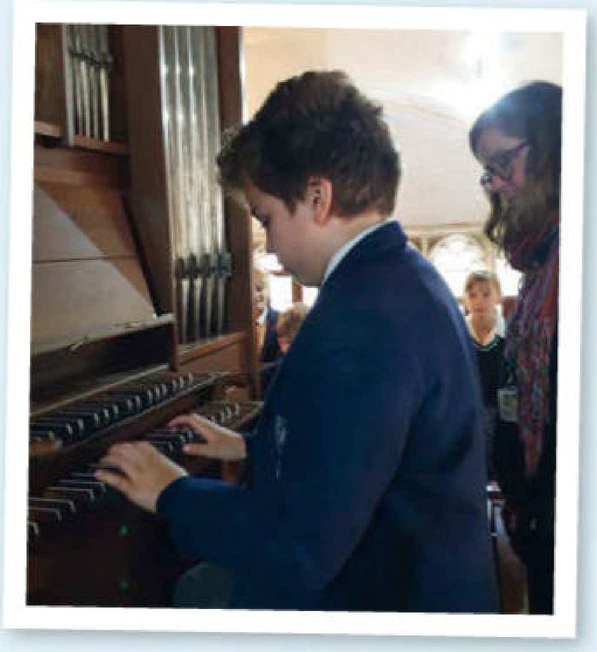
If you would like advice on lifetime gifting, please contact Wansbroughs on 01380 733300 or at wealth@wansbroughs.com.



Andrew Langbridge.

UKs first prep school pipe organ scholarships

Salisbury Cathedral School is proud to announce the launch of a new pipe organ scholarship programme, the first in a UK preparatory school. The new 'Griffiths Chapel Organ Scholarships', will support two organ scholars during upper prep, school years 7 and 8, commencing in September 2023 and / or September 2024.



Applications are welcomed from minimum grade 5 level keyboard players, or pupils already learning the organ, in current school years 5 and 6. The scholarship will run through upper prep. For more information, or to apply, please email admissions@salisburycathedralschool.com. Salisbury Cathedral School is a boarding school, registered with the BSA (Boarding Schools' Association), and so can accept applications from beyond its local area.

The successful candidates will receive a 20 per cent school fee remission – with access to significant further means tested bursary funds - weekly organ lessons, and regular performance opportunities in the school chapel and local churches, as well as the possibility of playing the famous Father Willis organ in Salisbury Cathedral. The two new organ scholars will also benefit from the thriving music department at Salisbury Cathedral School with its many choirs and ensembles as well as an extensive range of instrumental lessons available.

- *salisburycathedralschool.com*

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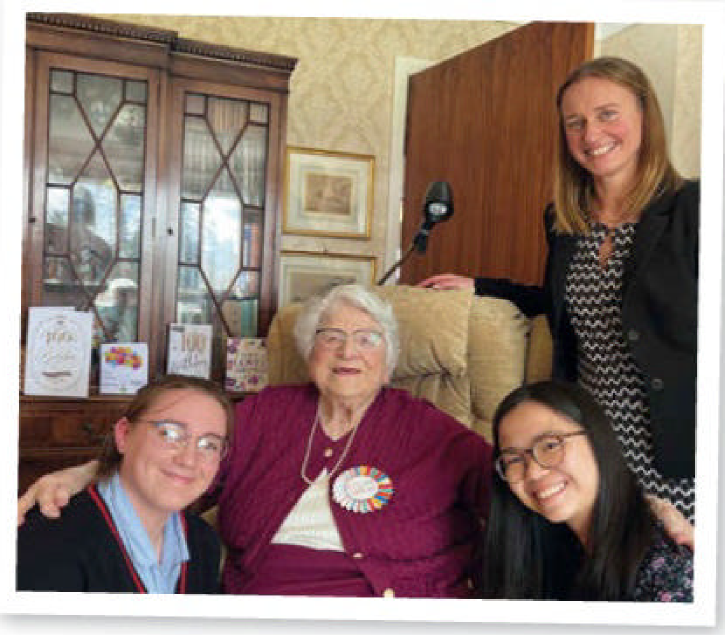

Godolphin's head, Jenny Price and students joined Salisbury resident Audrey Catford, who was surrounded by family and friends as she celebrated her 100th birthday on Wednesday February 22.

As part of the celebrations, Godolphin's fourth year student Emily Price performed *Bach's Cello Suite No 1 – Prelude*, and upper sixth student Iris Lam sang *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* by Mannin Sherwin. Art scholar Iris Lam also designed and presented a beautiful, signed card from the whole Godolphin community.

Audrey's home was full of cards, flowers and a beautiful birthday cake as well a personal 100th Birthday card from HM King Charles III.

Speaking from her home in Quidhampton, Audrey Catford thanked the students and said "Goodness me, your surprise visit absolutely made my day." Audrey, who spent much of her life in Torquay, returned to Salisbury for her retirement. She attended Godolphin in 1936-1941 and was head girl.

Godolphin's head Jenny Price said "It was a joy to celebrate Audrey's momentous milestone with her friends and family and it was wonderful to hear stories of her time at Godolphin. Audrey enjoys music and was a keen Cellist, so it seemed fitting for Emily to perform some unaccompanied Bach on the Cello for everyone to enjoy, with Iris encouraging everyone to sing Happy Birthday. We were delighted to be included in the celebrations for Audrey and we will all treasure this moment."

- *godolphin.org*

Join the Ultimate Challenge

St Margaret's Prep were delighted to welcome children from local primary schools for a *Lion King* themed creative arts workshop called 'Simba'. Twenty children joined from schools in and around Calne, including St Edmund's School, Fynamore School, Cherhill C of E School, Priestly School and Queen's Crescent School in Chippenham.

Children enjoyed two workshops – one in the art room where they made African head masks and one with the music team, where they rehearsed singing *I Just Can't Wait to be King*, along with a performance on the African drums. The evening culminated with a performance to parents – the children were thrilled to perform to their audience and delivered the song with great gusto!

Headmaster of Luke Bromwich closed the evening saying: 'At St Margaret's we are committed to developing community partnerships and this is the first of many events we are very much looking forward to hosting.' In May St Margaret's will be running their next community event – a sports workshop called The Ultimate Challenge.

Alongside St Mary's Calne, St Margaret's also run a children's community choir, 'The Major Minors,' who meet every Monday. For more information please contact office@stmargaretsprep.org.uk.

- *stmargaretsprep.org.uk*

Be the best that you can be

Warminster School welcomed members of the local community, pupils, and badminton fans to spend the evening with five-time gold medalist and Olympic silver medalist, Gail Emms, who was delivering Warminster's first TA Talk of the year.

Gail spent some time with pupils during their badminton fixture, observing their skills and offering encouragement. During her talk, Gail shared stories of how she met her famed doubles partner and their fight to get to the top. Being inspired by her mum (her hero and champion), one of the first Lionesses, she found her passion for badminton at an early age. It was not an easy start to Gail's career, as she explained to the audience how she was told that she 'wasn't skilled enough' or 'naturally talented' enough to make it in the elite world of badminton. However, after a break from the sport during her time at university, she reunited with her old doubles partner with fresh determination to make it to the pinnacle of her beloved sport.

The audience were also given an extra treat, a chance to hold Gail's World Championship gold medal, and her Olympic silver medal, providing inspiration to the younger attendees of what is possible with determination and focus. The lasting message that was given to the audience was 'Be the best you that you can be.' A lesson for young and old to take away from a truly inspirational evening.

Headmaster, Matt Williams, said: "Thank you to the wonderful Gail Emms MBE for delivering our first 'Thomas Arnold Talk' of 2023. Inspiring, moving and funny - a brilliant evening enjoyed by parents, pupils and badminton fans!"

- *warminsterschool.org.uk*

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Forage and feast

Kieron Mondahl is a chef at the Red Lion freehouse in in East Chisenbury, he shares his delicious recipe using an ingredient that is in abundance in the Wiltshire countryside.

Charred Broccoli with Wild Garlic Houmous and a Spring Onion Pesto

IT'S THAT time of year that chefs quite stereotypically say that Yorkshire rhubarb and wild garlic are some of their favourite ingredients to use.

I'm no different. They're two of the earliest, most fantastic ingredients that become readily available in the year.

Yorkshire rhubarb, whilst available January and February and wild garlic (a little later), to me, signal that spring is here, if not, then just around the corner.

Where you find it, it tends to grow in abundance. Its sweet, but strong aroma, I feel is to be enjoyed. It always brings a smile to my face when I'm driving around somewhere and suddenly get a whiff of that unmistakable smell.

Ingredients

- 500g purple sprouting broccoli or tenderstem broccoli

Wild Garlic And Butterbean Houmous

- 240g of cooked butterbeans
- 12 wild garlic leaves
- 30ml of rapeseed oil
- 2 tbsp of tahini
- 1 small lemon, juiced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Spring Onion Pesto

- 8 spring onions roasted
- 30g of pinenuts
- 15g Old Winchester cheese finely grated
- ¼ bunch parsley chopped
- 1 tsp white wine vinegar
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 60ml of rapeseed oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

To serve

- Wild garlic flowers

Its leaves can be used in many ways and recipes, the flowers are edible and even the buds can be pickled to bring something a little different to a dish.

The following dish shows the ease at which wild garlic can be used.

Please note: Always take care when foraging for wild ingredients. It is perfectly legal on public spaces and footpaths but do not wander on to private land without the land owner's permission, and remember to leave plenty for others – including wildlife.

Houmous:

1. Drain a tin of cooked butter beans and rinse with cold water.

2. Weigh 240g of the beans place into a blender.

3. Wash and drain the wild garlic and add to the blender along with the tahini, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Start blending and slowly add the rapeseed oil to emulsify. Adjust seasoning as needed and set aside once you have a smooth houmous consistency.

Pesto:

1. Take 8 spring onions, remove outer layer and wash so they're clean. Play onto a baking tray and roast at 180°c for about 5-10 minutes with a little rapeseed oil, until tender.

2. Toast the pinenuts in a frying pan on the stove until golden brown. Allow the nuts and spring onions to cool.

3. Place all ingredients into a food processor other than the Old Winchester and pulse. There should still be a slight texture to your pesto. Fold through the cheese and adjust seasoning.

Broccoli:

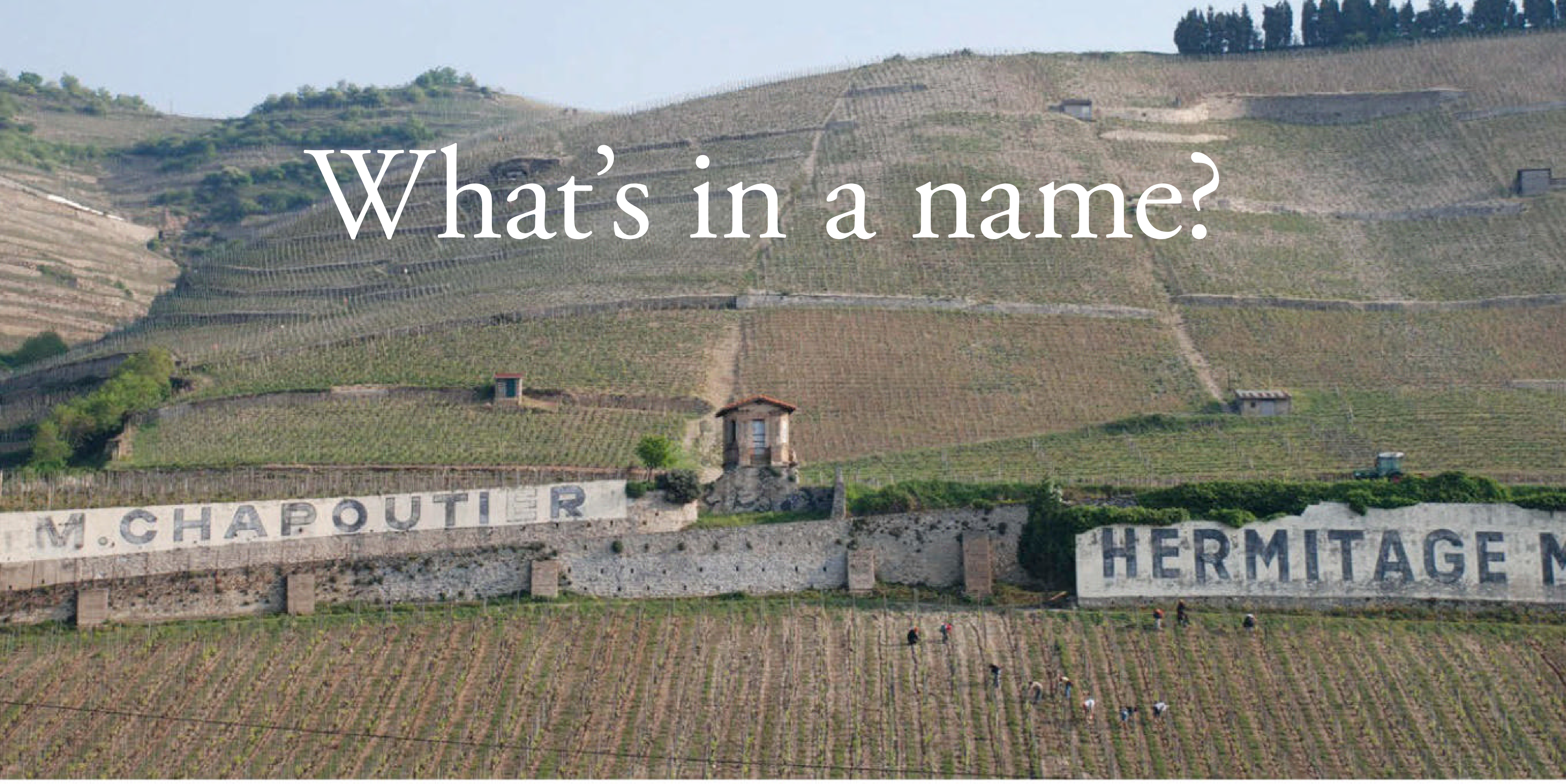
1. Take your broccoli, trim it and blanch in boiling salted water. Size depending this will take 2-4 minutes. It needs to be just cooked with a slight bite still.

2. Drain and drizzle with a little rapeseed oil. Char on a preheated griddle pan to get some nice colour and smoky flavour to your broccoli.

To serve:

1. To serve ensure the pesto and houmous is room temperature. Place a large spoonful of houmous onto your place, spread it out a bit. Top with your broccoli and then your pesto. Finish with wild garlic flowers to garnish. Enjoy!

- *www.redlionfreehouse.com*
  Telephone: 01980 671124



What's in a name?

Grant Berry from Yapp Brothers wine merchants in Mere takes a look at a grape variety whose style can cause a bit of confusion.

Syrah and Shiraz – what's the difference?

SYRAH IS one of the noble grape varieties, capable of producing rich, full-bodied, age-worthy wines, 'greats' such as Hermitage, Cornas, Côte Rôtie or Australia's flagship Penfolds' 'Grange' where it's known as Shiraz. Top examples from iconic estates understandably command high prices, but what's in the name?

Shiraz is the New World Syrah and Syrah is the French name for Shiraz. Chicken and egg. Needless to say, if bottles are labelled Syrah, that usually means the wine is medium- to full-bodied with both elegant red and black berry fruit aromas and flavours, some smoke and spice. Shiraz is Syrah turned up to 11 – full-bodied, darker and bolder both in fruit, pepper and depth. Yet some New World producers choose to label their wines as Syrah – usually lighter examples often grown in cooler sites that aim to be floral, graceful wines with subtle intensity.

So what should I look out for?

Certain areas like Crozes-Hermitage in France's Northern Rhône valley and the Barossa Valley in South Australia are synonymous with certain styles of Syrah/Shiraz that are opposite ends on the spectrum. Northern Rhône Syrahs are cool-climate wines that vary in weight and body from medium to medium-full. Maxime Graillot and Thomas Schmittel's modern 'Equinoxe' bottling (Yapp.co.uk, £19.75) is a modern fruit-driven and medium-weight style of Syrah to enjoy on its youthful fruit. Wine writer Matthew Jukes was recently very taken with it, enthusing that it 'looked swaggering and proud with smoky bacon and cracked black pepper tones over a heady blackberry coulis palate.'

A similarly European Syrah yet in sharp relief to the 'Equinoxe' can be found to the north in Côte-Rôtie, where Patrick Jasmin is known for his meticulous attention to detail and for his premium-priced Côte-Rôtie. Lesser-known is his de-classified Syrah 'La Chevalière' which is sourced from vines bordering Côte-Rôtie (Yapp.co.uk, £19.25) and has a lovely savoury, spicy edge with hints of black olive and chargrilled meats alongside black cherries.

Thinking about Shiraz, however, the warm Barossa Valley in South Australia just north of Adelaide is the historic heart of Australian wine. With some seriously old vines, fiery heat and dry-farming methods, yields of inky-purple fruit are notoriously low but intense, jammy and concentrated. Penfolds, Torbreck, St. Hallett, Peter Lehmann and Yalumba are the established brands and produce varying labels at different price levels. Majestic's Definition bottling of Barossa Shiraz is uber-reliable coming from one of the top producers in the area – bold, strong blackcurrant fruit flavours are backed up by intense spice and a lick of tannin. This requires chargrilled red meat or hot-smoked mackerel to shine (Majestic, £11.99 in Mix Six). If you fancy a real treat, organic pioneer Jasper Hill's Georgia's Shiraz from Victoria is a bucket-list wine that has length to die for (Yapp.co.uk, £49.95).

The hill of Hermitage in France's northern Rhône valley is synonymous with the Syrah/Shiraz grape.

To contrast, Carsten Migliarina's Stellenbosch Syrah comes from one of the warmest growing regions in the Cape, yet the micro-climates of the Helderberg vineyards from which the fruit is sourced are cooled by ocean breezes. Fresh yet understated, this boutique Syrah (around 4,000 bottles are produced) has an elegance and freshness to its forest fruit flavours backed up by good minerality and a touch of smoked bacon (Yapp.co.uk, £19.75)

Lastly, look out for Syrah being grown in unlikely locations from Mexico to Morocco (yes, really, try 'Tandem' from the Graillot family - Yapp.co.uk, £19.50).

My final recommendation comes from somewhat closer to home - the southern Pfalz in Germany. Even 20 years ago, ripening Syrah in such a northerly location would have been unthinkable but climate change and careful site selection has made it possible. Using his global experience with the grape, talented winemaker Stefan Meyer has a tiny parcel of Syrah that's planted in a sheltered microclimate in the Pfälzerwald nature reserve. A tiny quantity is produced in only the best vintages and its classic berry fruit and peppery notes ensure it pairs well with local slow-braised pork dishes (Yapp.co.uk, £35). WL

- *www.yapp.co.uk*

It's going to be a long hard winter

Cost of Living Crisis
Appeal 2022

Help us support local people who will be facing immense hardship

Many people across Wiltshire and Swindon are in for an anxious, challenging winter in the face of escalating rent, food and energy prices – forcing them to skip meals to feed their children or go without heating.

In response to this Wiltshire Community Foundation has launched a Cost of Living Crisis Appeal to support grassroots groups and charities helping families and individuals - whether that be through food, money advice, assistance with fuel bills or providing somewhere warm for them to go. But we need your support to do this.

We know there is additional pressure on all our finances this year but if you are in a position to be able to pass on some of your Winter Fuel Allowance, Energy Bill Support Grant or just wish to donate we can redirect it to where it is needed most, helping to support vulnerable local people at a time of crisis.

You can donate by calling 01380 738989, using the QR code below or at localgiving.org/appeal/CostofLiving/

We will be hugely appreciative of any amount you feel able to give - thank you.

Wiltshire
Community
Foundation

Sandcliff House 21 Northgate Street, Devizes,
SN10 1JT. Registered Charity no. 1123126

Right plant, right place

Garden designer and beekeeper Sophie Butcher explains how to plan plants for hot summers in your garden.

HOW DO you create a beautiful garden which involves less work and happier plants better able to withstand all that climate change throws at them? It's about finding the right plant for your garden's conditions.

This month, I talk to Åsa Gregers-Warg, head gardener at the Beth Chatto gardens, famous for its Gravel Garden. Once a car park, this was originally set up as an experiment. Now it is famous for never being watered. Despite being situated in one of the driest parts of the country (rainfall on a par with Malta), not being irrigated, and having poor, free-draining soil, it is renowned for its spectacular display of drought-tolerant plants. Last year, while it looked a bit tired by the autumn, despite the summer drought it was definitely still thriving. Right plants, right place.

Reducing watering

'If we continue to have long hot summers like the last one,' says Åsa, 'we are all going to have to learn to change our mindset about what gardens should look like. We should not expect our lawns to be emerald green through the summer. They will look brown for a while but they will green back up when the rains come. We all have a responsibility when it comes to being waterwise. I am not saying that people can't have pots with bedding plants, but perhaps use bigger pots that hold more peat-free compost, and so hold the moisture better.'

In addition, Åsa makes the most of the weather and dormancy period by planting in the spring or autumn. 'We only water new plants when we plant them,' she continues. 'We usually put in small plants, first dunking them into a bucket of water to make sure that there are no air pockets in the roots, before planting them and watering them in very well. Then we leave them one or two weeks, checking all the time to see how they are faring. Sometimes we may have to water a few plants again, but quite often that is it.

Eco-Future Fest

Chippenham Eco-Future Fest takes place on Saturday April 15 (11am-4pm) at Chippenham Town Hall, SN15 3ER. Includes talks, live music, free tea and coffee, stalls from sustainable businesses, community groups and organisations offering money-saving guidance, renewable energy advice, freebies, clothes swap, family activities, demonstrations, environmentally friendly products, wildflower seeds and beekeeping.

- *www.chippenham.gov.uk/eco-future-fest*

COURTESY OF BETH CHATTO GARDENS

Top: It is the subtle structure of the garden and the combination of textures and shapes that makes this garden so delightful.

Above: The spiky leaves of the Yucca contrast with the fluffy Stipa tenuissima grasses, and the big round leaves of the Bergenias at the front.

It is only when we plant a very large shrub that we might have to continue watering it through the summer.'

Mulch to reduce watering

When it comes to reducing water loss through evaporation, Åsa advocates mulching. 'In the gravel garden we mulch with gravel; in the rest of the garden we use composted council waste.' Dish it around shrubs so you don't cover the stem.

You can buy compost from places like Hills, who collect food waste and compost it (www.hills-waste.co.uk/buy-compost), or use spent mushroom compost or composted bark fines. All work well as weed suppressants and soil conditioners and improve the soil structure and water-holding capacity.

Create a good structure

Before you even start choosing shrubs and perennials, you need to get the structure of your garden right. 'I always try and get this sorted first,' says Åsa. 'The hard landscaping, the trees, the large shrubs and a few grasses.' These don't have to be evergreen but think of them as blocks that give rhythm to your garden.

'It is easy to be seduced by pretty flowers in a garden centre,' Åsa admits. 'While it is hard to identify the right plants for your garden if you don't have any expertise, I would look for something that doesn't just have a pretty flower for a short time. Ideally you want something with nice foliage as well as nice seedheads or berries. Then think about contrasting textures and shapes of foliage. Also look at what your neighbours grow and what grows well in your area already. This is usually an indication that these plants will be happy in your garden.'

When combining plants, consider ones that tolerate different conditions so that your planting blends and flows. For example, Ligustrum japonica (Privet) works in full sun and tolerates full shade. It has fragrant creamy panicles of flowers followed by small berries in the autumn (toxic to horses), and can be grown as a hedge or a tree.

Crucially, getting the right plant in the right place has the added benefit of making your garden more resilient and less hard work.

The Beth Chatto website has a ton of information to help you identify the right plant for the right place. On the Shop-for-Plants tab, you will find useful lists of plants for given conditions, including plants for dry areas, for shade and for damp areas. When you click on each plant, you will see details about each plant's particular preferences so you can plan better. WL

- *www.bethchatto.co.uk.*
- *Sophie Butcher is the beekeeping garden designer based in Chippenham. www.hithergardendesigns.co.uk*

How to identify the right plant for the right place

Consider the bed you are buying plants for carefully and tick the conditions that apply.

The bed is in:
☐ full sun all day
☐ full sun part of the day (partial shade)
☐ shade all day.

The bed faces:
☐ north ☐ east ☐ south ☐ west.

It is:
☐ exposed
☐ sheltered from the worst of the weather.

The soil is:
☐ poorly drained
☐ moist but free draining
☐ dry.

The soil is:
☐ chalk ☐ clay ☐ loam ☐ sand.

The pH. If you don't know your pH, you can get testing kits. Or, in most cases, you can opt for plants that like neutral conditions.

You can then search using the dataset for a particular bed on the RHS plant-finder page (www.rhs.org.uk/plants/search-form), as well as make other choices (plant height and width, low maintenance, drought resistance, colours, foliage choice, autumn colour and more).

You can refine your choice. For example, Ceanothus likes to be sheltered rather than exposed, in moist-but-well-drained and well-drained soil, in full sun but not north facing. If necessary, cross reference against other useful lists on the RHS website, including deer/rabbit/drought tolerant plants, plants for bugs, and more.

Armed with this list, you will be in a better position to make the right choices for your garden at the garden centre/nursery, where you will also be able to consult their advisers.

Tolerant of dry shade

Herbaceous and perennials: Alchemilla mollis (lady's mantle), Liriope (evergreen, also for partial shade; they tend to scorch in the sun in a hot summer), Vinca major (greater periwinkle, evergreen)

Shrubs: Ligustrum japonica (Japanese privet, evergreen), Mahonia aquifolium (Oregon grape, evergreen), Ribes sanguineum (flowering currant), Taxus baccata (yew, evergreen)

Ferns: Blechnum spicant (hard fern, evergreen), Dryopteris filix-mas

Ground cover: Hederas (ivy, evergreen), Pachysandra terminalis (Japanese spurge, evergreen), Rubus tricolor (Chinese bramble, evergreen)

Dry soil in full sun

Herbaceous and perennials: Achilleas (yarrow), Agapanthus, Alliums, Dianthus (pinks), Bergenia cordifolia (or partial shade), Erigeron (Mexican fleabane), Euphorbias (key plants in the Gravel Garden), Geranium macrorrhizum (partial shade), Geranium phaeum (partial shade), Helianthemums (rock roses), Hostas (partial shade), Hylotelephiums (sedums), Oenothera lindheimeri (gaura), Perovskia (Russian sage)

Shrubs: Artemisia 'Powis Castle' (evergreen), Ballota pseudodictamnus (false dittany, evergreen), Brachyglottis greyi (senecio, evergreen), Caryopteris (bluebeard), Ceanothus (Californian lilac, evergreen), Cistus (evergreen), Hebe pinguifolia (evergreen), Lavandula spp (evergreen), Salvia rosmarinus (rosemary, evergreen), Santolina spp (lavender cotton, evergreen)

Grasses: Stipa gigantea (golden oats, evergreen), Stipa tenuissima (Mexican feather grass)

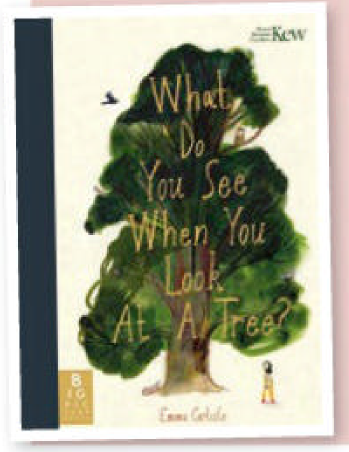
Ground cover: Stachys byzantina (lamb's ears, evergreen), Thymus spp (thymes, evergreen)

Stuff to do in April

- Get involved in something bigger than your own garden. Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together. There are branches all over Wiltshire so you can get involved locally. www.farmgarden.org.uk
- Keep on top of bindweed (the bane of my life). Dig up the roots carefully – any growing tip left behind is enough for this weed to make a comeback.
- Pot up your dahlia tubers and you can also plant lily bulbs straight into the ground.
- Sharpen your garden sheers and give your perennial grasses a haircut.
- Cut back winter shrubs grown for their colourful stems to about knee height, above some buds.
- Mulch and feed them with some well rotted manure.

Settle down with a good book

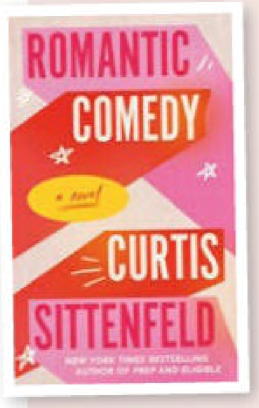
Here is a wide selection of books suggested by The White Horse Book Shop in Marlborough. From romantic comedy, books for younger readers to an insight into life in the Royal household.



What Do You See When You Look at a Tree? by Emma Carlisle

Beautiful water-colour illustrations enhance this lovely book which encourages children (and adults) to explore empathy and mindfulness through a greater connection with nature.

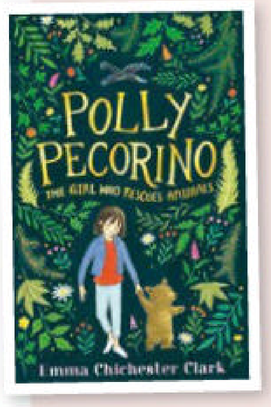
£8.99 ISBN: 9781800784383



Romantic Comedy by Curtis Sittenfeld

Warm, funny, acerbic and mildly subversive, this author's fans will be delighted with this classic three-act story of attraction, self-sabotage and true love. A look at contemporary dating and relationships, against a background of American television comedy, international rock stardom and Covid.

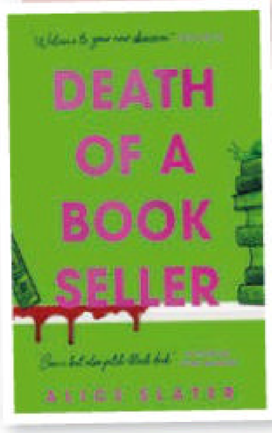
£16.99 ISBN: 2928377154820



Polly Pecorino by Emma Chichester Clarke

If you go down to the woods in this delightful children's story about a kind girl and a kidnapped bear, you're sure of a heart-warming, exciting and beautifully illustrated read.

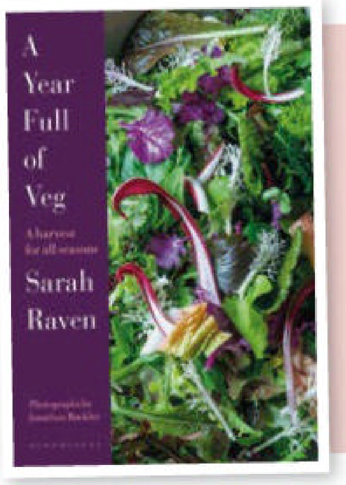
£7.99 ISBN: 9781406369076



Death of a Bookseller by Alice Slater

Surely bookshops are warm, civilized, comforting and welcoming places, and booksellers among the most charming and amiable of people? Don't be too sure. This debut crime novel is dark and atmospheric.

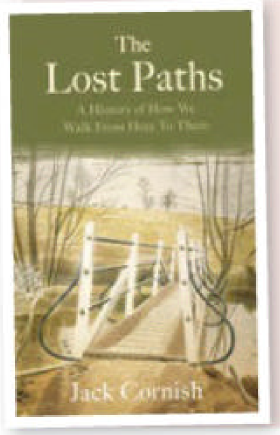
£14.99 ISBN: 9781529385328



A Year Full of Veg by Sarah Raven

Practical and inspirational, this gardening guide highlights techniques to ensure a reliable year round supply of vegetables herbs and salads. Including some less common varieties.

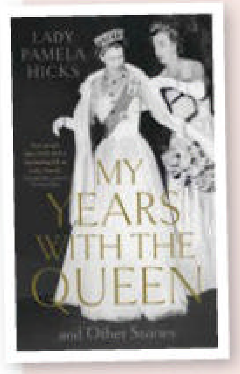
£27.00 ISBN: 9781526639349



Lost Paths by Jack Cornish

A timely reminder of the importance of celebrating our footpaths and rights of way. The author has spent the last five years walking hundreds of miles on almost-forgotten lanes and pathways, routes which have formed and been formed by Britain's communities, wars, commerce and leisure.

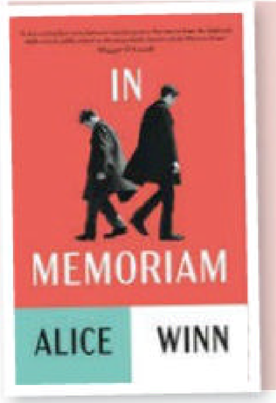
£16.99 ISBN: 9781405951289



My Years with the Queen by Lady Pamela Hicks

The late Queen's cousin, gives a personal account of the years she spent as part of the royal family's inner circle, with an insider's view of some of the major events of the 70 years of Elizabeth II's reign.

£20.00 ISBN: 9781529148862



In Memoriam by Alice Winn

A First World War novel, and a love story that unsparingly describes the physical and emotional toll the trenches took on the (very) young men who fought. This is an assured and confident debut by an author to watch.

£14.99 ISBN: 9780241567821

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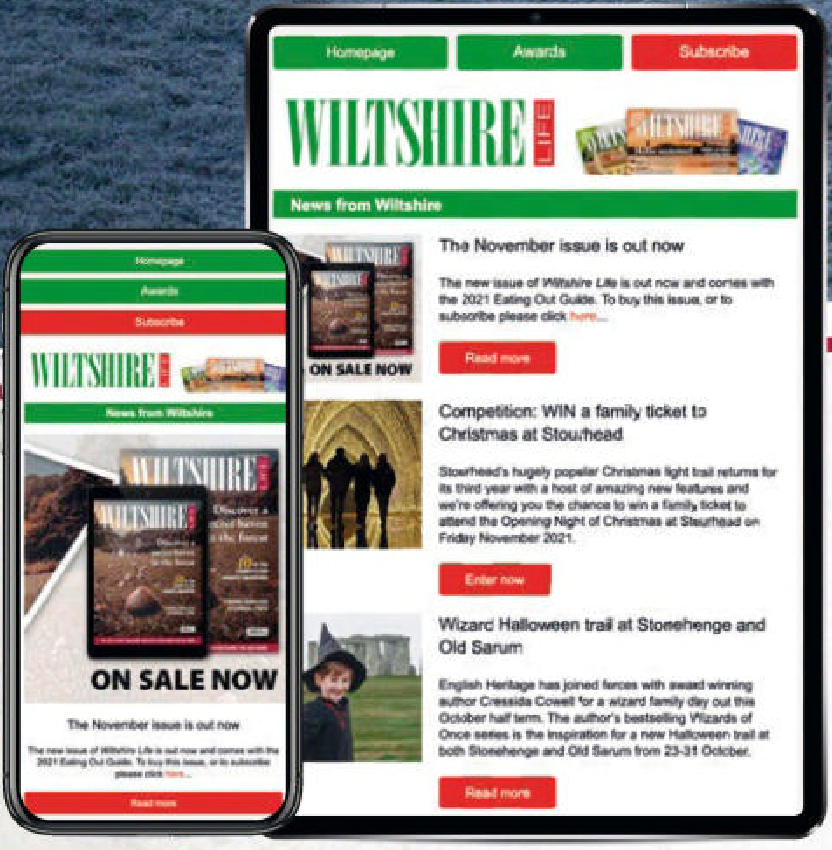


The November issue is out now

The new issue of *Wiltshire Life* is out now and comes with the 2021 Eating Out Guide. To buy this issue, or to subscribe please click here...

Competition: WIN a family ticket to Christmas at Stourhead

Stourhead's hugely popular Christmas light trail returns for its third year with a host of amazing new features and we're offering you the chance to win a family ticket to attend the Opening Night of Christmas at Stourhead on Friday November 2021.

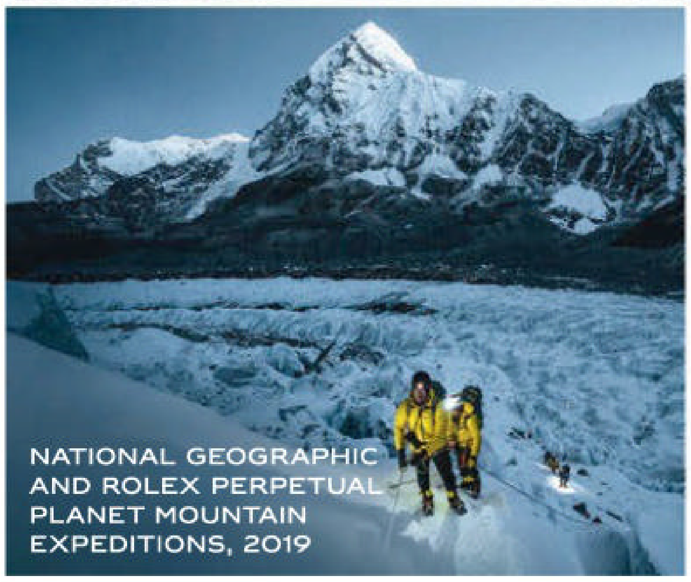
Wizard Halloween trail at Stonehenge and Old Sarum

English Heritage has joined forces with award winning author Cressida Cowell for a wizard family day out this October half term. The author's bestselling Wizards of Once series is the inspiration for a new Halloween trail at both Stonehenge and Old Sarum from 23-31 October.

Learn even more about life in Wiltshire by receiving our newsletter direct to your inbox

Sign up at wiltshirelife.co.uk/Newsletter

SIR EDMUND HILLARY AND TENZING NORGAY, 1953
FIRST SUCCESSFUL ASCENT OF MT EVEREST



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Its name says it all. The Explorer was inspired by those who first summited the Earth's highest peaks. Like them, it is able to endure these most strenuous conditions. However sober and smart this watch may be, it is precisely the tool these adventurers need. Amidst the chaos of the unknown, what these men and women require is reliability and above all, simplicity. Something reassuring, efficient and instantly legible, to ground them even if nothing else around or within them does. This watch embodies just that. An unremitting teller of time, come wind, hail or tempests, that will see one's own adventure to its pinnacle. **The Explorer.**

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